

Lower Island NEWS

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A government in waiting...



Forty-one newly elected New Democratic Party MLAs--a new government in waiting--gather for a photo op before the work of the Legislature begins.



Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver (left) and NDP leader John Horgan shake hands at the Legislature.

Clark's political games are hurting British Columbians, say Horgan and Weaver

VICTORIA — John Horgan and Andrew Weaver are calling on Christy Clark to stop playing games and give British Columbians the new leadership they voted for. Since originally pledging to hold a confidence vote quickly, Clark has delayed the vote so it won't occur until nearly two months from the time British Columbians voted for change.

New Democrat Leader John Horgan says Clark's delays and distractions mean priorities like education, housing affordability, and the opioid crisis are not being addressed.

"While British Columbians struggle with rising costs and damaged services, Christy Clark is playing political games and attempting to cling to power as long as possible," said Horgan. "Instead of getting out of the way so our new government can hire teachers and address housing affordability, Christy Clark is hanging on for a few more weeks so she can give her friends pay bumps."

BC Green Leader Andrew Weaver points out that after claiming she wanted to cooperate with other parties, Clark is now focused on her own political interests instead of the interests of British Columbians.

"British Columbians are ready for a new kind of politics where parties work together to make life better for people, we're ready to do that," said Weaver. "British Columbians don't want more delays and distractions from Christy Clark. They want a new government that puts people first, and we're ready to get to work."

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Electoral reform – Progress is possible nationally too!

By Helen Forsey

Those of us east of the Rockies are of course thrilled with the prospect of electoral reform being implemented in BC. Congratulations are in order, and we will be cheering you on as things move forward in the province.

On the federal scene, of course, things remain discouraging, with the defeat of Nathan Cullen's concurrence motion in the House of Commons and the continuing invisibility of the issue in the mainstream media. But an idea from the far side of the country has been spreading and gaining support over recent weeks – an idea which offers a realistic way forward for supporters of proportional representation at the national level.

In the months since Prime Minister Trudeau's about-face on electoral reform, real change in our federal voting system has begun to feel like a lost cause. A vigorous and high-profile public discussion got pushed back into the shadows, and now the prospects for breathing life back into the issue seem rather dim. The hitherto fluid and hopeful "how-to" discourse so many of us were involved in has morphed into a battle where the various players – organizations and political parties alike – are dug into their own particular positions and unwilling to lose face. There might appear to be no way out.

Ah, but there is. Led by *Democracy Alert* in St. John's, Newfoundland, several groups are putting forward an idea that has benefits for all sides. Their proposal? Attach a referendum question to the 2019 federal election posing a simple choice between a) keeping the present system, or, b) moving to a more proportional one. Then, if the referendum favours proportional representation, the incoming government would complete the process of selecting the best

system and putting it in place for the following election.

One of the recurring problems of electoral reform efforts to date has been the complex mechanics of the different systems of proportional representation being considered. As *Democracy Alert's* Marilyn Reid explains, that complexity can confuse the issue and discourage people. A simplified referendum asking voters to choose or reject PR based on its merits rather than its mechanics would enable citizens to argue the real pros and cons of change versus the status quo before deciding to adopt a particular system.

A quick recap of where we're at right now. After spectacularly reversing their commitment to ending the distortions and false majorities of first-past-the-post elections, Trudeau and his ministers trotted out every possible excuse to justify keeping the very system they had formerly denounced.

Electoral reform has since been fading from the headlines, in accordance with the government's efforts to consign it to oblivion. But the grassroots citizens' movement is not about to give up. After months of tangible progress towards their goal of proportional representation, the most vocal reform organizations continue to demand that the Liberals' fulfill their original promise – a new system in place for the 2019 trip to the polls.

Unfortunately, that 2019 deadline now constitutes an obstacle to its own goal. In order to jump through all the procedural hoops required to implement such a change in time for the next election, legislation would have to be developed and passed in double-quick time. But hasty legislation has an alarming record of being counter-productive, especially on complex and controversial issues. Moreover, as the official Opposition has pointed out, changing the system without explicitly asking

Canadian voters whether or not they want change suggests a lack of respect for democratic principles.

At this point, then, the 2019 implementation deadline is simply not a good idea for either supporters or opponents of proportional representation, or for the undecided. The timeline should be adjusted.

But that's adjusted, not abandoned. Contrary to the government's assertions, the Special Committee on Electoral Reform last year did find broad consensus across the country for a move to greater proportionality – that is, election results that reflect approximately the popular vote. What they did not find in the short time available was a specific system that they could unreservedly recommend.

There are many potentially viable forms such a system could take, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Given the complexities and the time involved, the next step is not to decide on a particular model, but to have voters make the crucial choice between keeping first-past-the-post or moving to a more proportional system.

For those who like the prospect of electoral reform, this proposal would provide the opportunity to move the matter forward. For those who favour the status quo, it would give them a definitive chance to defend it. For the various opposition parties, it would break the current deadlock and enable them to work co-operatively again, implementing the agreement they reached late last year in the multi-party Electoral Reform Committee. And for a government facing burgeoning cynicism and disillusionment, it would offer a way to address the problems they now see with their own ambitious campaign promise, and a chance to try and restore a degree of public trust around this issue.

We must not let the Trudeau government's shelving of this major commitment become just one more bit of old news. With

more Canadians aware of the issue than ever before, now is the critical time to take the next step forward.

The *Democracy Alert* proposal gives us a way to do that which is both principled and practical. Their modified referendum plan provides the time that will be needed to pursue the work the multi-party Electoral Reform Committee began, examining the many possible systems and selecting the best one for Canadians.

This essential process should not be rushed, but nor should it be delayed any longer. One of the beauties of this plan is that attaching the referendum to the next general election will both minimize expenses and maximize public involvement. It may require an amendment to the Referendum Act, but the benefits would make it well worthwhile.

Coming out of Newfoundland and Labrador, this proposal has already sparked the interest of some parliamentarians, and once it is more widely known, it should win broad support from the public across the country. It could be a workable and productive compromise in the best Canadian tradition.

This is not a pipe dream. Like the positive changes now happening in the Senate, a fairer, workable, made-in-Canada electoral system is a totally achievable work in progress. It has been temporarily halted by a misguided decision, but it is propelled by the will of millions of citizens. Now we all just have to get out of our own way, listen to each other, and use our collective energy, creativity and experience to make it happen.

Helen Forsey is a writer based in Ontario and Newfoundland. Her latest book is *A People's Senate for Canada – Not a Pipe Dream*. This is a slightly revised version of an article by the author that appeared in the *Hill Times* on May 1.

Cowichan-Malahat-Langford (CML) New Democrats

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Getting big money out of BC politics

By Alex Hemingway and Shannon Daub

While British Columbians were divided over which of the main parties to support in the provincial election, most seem to agree on one thing: the need to get big money out of our politics.

But it's not enough to stop cash donations by corporations and unions.

Any ban must be comprehensive, meaning no contributions of property and services, prohibiting loans or guaranteeing loans, and banning institutional contributions to party leadership and constituency nomination races.

We need strict limits on *individual* donations to political parties so wealthy people do not have an advantage.

Quebec limited political donations in 2013, capping them at \$100 a year (an extra \$100 allowed in election years).

We must also reduce the amount parties can spend during and between elections.

The expense limit for political parties in BC's 2017 election was a whopping \$4.9 million, meaning parties with big bucks can finance slick advertising and armies of campaigners. In Quebec, party election spending is limited to \$0.68 per elector, which would limit spending to about \$2.3 million if applied in BC.

Without limits between elections, parties can spend heavily in the months leading up to the campaign period. Unless a spending limit between elections is enacted to curb the undemocratic influence of corporate money, the huge war chest raised by BC's Liberal Party from corporate donations, for example, can be used freely going forward.

Once we have strict donation and spending limits in place, we need a fair and transparent system for financing political parties.

Premier Christy Clark says banning big money means taxpayers must subsidize political parties. But we already do and it's not very fair. Political donors get tax breaks

that cost about \$16 million per election cycle or \$4 million annually.

Here are three viable alternatives for funding BC's political process.

1. *Per-vote subsidy*: Canadian political parties used this federally between 2004 and 2015 and received \$2.04 annually for each vote won in the previous election. The per-vote subsidy is problematic, however, because it favours the incumbent party by locking in funding from one election to the next even though a voter's preference may change over a government's four-year term.

2. *Matching small donations*: Small donations up to a certain amount (for example \$25) are matched with public funding. Under New York City's innovative system donations are publicly matched 6-to-1. This successfully increased both the number of small donors and proportion of small donations, and made the demographic profile of donors more representative of the population. Tailoring this model for BC would build incentives for bottom-up political engagement into our campaign finance system.

3. *Universal voucher*: A universal voucher of \$10 or \$20 per year in the elections section of income tax returns could be directed to the political party of a voter's choice (or withheld if dissatisfied with the available options).

Changing how we finance elections is a critical first step in containing the influence of big money. To make our democracy more vibrant and fair, we must also tackle problems like corporate investments in lobbying and the root causes of our society's deepening inequality.

Banning big money needs to be the beginning, not the end, of a conversation among British Columbians about restoring integrity to our democracy.

Alex Hemingway is Public Finance Analyst at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office. Shannon Daub is the CCPA-BC's Associate Director and co-Director of the Corporate Mapping Project.

Why a BC NDP-Green Government will last longer than pundits think

Predictions of doom, trickery and legislative stalemate are all wrong

By Bill Tieleman

"It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in people's minds." — Samuel Adams, American revolutionary 1722-1803

The coming BC NDP government to be led by John Horgan and backed by the Green Party is going to last a lot longer than the BC Liberals and some pundits think.

Despite the narrow majority — just one vote when the combined 41 NDP MLAs join with three Green MLAs versus the 43 BC Liberals — the predictions of doom, trickery by outgoing Premier Christy Clark to stay in power, and legislative stalemate over the speaker are all wrong. Here's why.

First, majorities truly matter, even the thinnest. And a strong majority of voters chose progressive change over more of the same from the BC Liberals after 16 years in office.

Second, while every piece of legislation will likely be decided by one vote, relatively few bills will be what are called confidence or supply votes — the only ones that could defeat the government.

BC's legislature sat for only 51 days in 2016 and 36 in 2013. While it will sit more frequently in future according to the NDP-Green agreement, votes that could defeat the government won't be a regular occurrence.

Third, any desperate attempt by Clark and the BC Liberals to thwart the electoral results would backfire into a disaster.

And the Liberal caucus knows that Clark isn't the person to lead them into the next scheduled election in 2021 or a snap election long before then.

In fact, the leader with the shortest political future and biggest problems isn't Horgan or Green leader Andrew Weaver — it's Clark.

It was only hours after the election that Clark's most powerful internal BC Liberal foe, former finance minister Kevin Falcon, criticized her government.

"For the BC Liberals, they really got hammered particularly in the Lower Mainland, and I think that reflects frustration over a number of issues, campaign finance, lack of progress over transportation projects, and just a little too much politics and not quite enough policy initiative," Falcon told the *Vancouver Sun*.

"I think the perceived ethical issues, the campaign finance issues that were never really addressed, I think that really gnawed away at people, and it bothered them and that was reflected in a negative vote," Falcon continued, pointing out the obvious, but not oblivious to the fact that his comments would hold more weight than criticism from outside Liberal ranks.

Given Falcon's close second-place finish to Clark in the BC Liberal leadership contest of 2011 and the fact that 19 MLAs supported his bid to just one for Clark, his comments are an early indication that her grip on power is slipping fast — and that Falcon may be ready to return to politics.

Falcon's criticism is based on facts: Clark had every advantage going into the May 9 election and still lost her majority along with four cabinet ministers.

After the final count, the BC Liberals only had 1,566 votes more than the BC NDP, the closest election result in provincial history.

But the BC Liberals went into the election with Canada's strongest economy; an enviable four balanced budgets; party coffers filled with an astonishing \$21.3 million raised in just the last 17 months, with huge corporate donations; and having spent \$15 million — double the budgeted amount — on pre-election government advertising that was clearly promoting the BC Liberals.

And yet they came up short. The reason — voters really don't like Christy Clark.

A post-election Insights West poll, before results were final, asked British Columbians their preferences for the next

government.

The results were bad news for Clark. The poll showed a divided province — 48 percent supported an NDP minority government led by Horgan or an NDP majority government.

The same number supported a Liberal minority government — if it was led by someone other than Clark. When the pollster asked about a BC Liberal minority led by Clark, only 38 percent responded positively.

Those results echo a pre-election Angus Reid Institute poll that showed 62 percent of voters disapproved of Clark's performance as premier.

And another Reid poll in March determined that 76 percent of respondents agreed that the BC Liberal government is "only interested in helping its political donors and big business." Clark wore that self-created albatross through the campaign.

Given all this, it's highly likely there will be a BC Liberal leadership contest soon, and the Liberals won't want a snap election without a leader.

In fact, they won't want an election until a new leader is established and leading in the polls, leading to significant stability in the legislature. Their leadership process would probably take at least 12 months and up to two years to conclude.

Speaker issue isn't really an issue

Some commentators have claimed the narrow NDP-Green majority means the legislature will not be elect a Speaker, and that will lead to a quick election. But despite the hair-splitting of academics and journalists, it's not that complicated.

The most definitive guide to British parliamentary procedure around the world states it succinctly:

"If the numbers in a division [a vote] are equal, the Speaker, who otherwise does not vote, must give the casting vote. In the performance of this duty, he is at liberty to vote like any other Member, according to his conscience, without assigning a reason; but, in order to avoid the least imputation upon his impartiality, it is usual for him, when practicable, to vote in such a manner as not to make the decision of the House final," wrote Erskine May in his 1844 guide to parliamentary practice.

And if that isn't sufficient, Section 49 of Canada's *Constitution Act* (BNA Act), 1867 states: "Questions arising in the House of

Commons shall be decided by a Majority of Voices other than that of the Speaker, and when the Voices are equal, but not otherwise, the Speaker shall have a Vote."

And we have a recent example in Canada, where then-speaker Peter Milliken, a Liberal Member of Parliament, held the post for three minority governments and cast five tie-breaking votes.

While it would be better if the BC Liberals agreed to put forward a Speaker in order to avoid a New Democrat or Green Speaker breaking ties regularly, there is no question that would be both proper and legal.

"It is not a matter of law. It is a political rule that can't be enforced by the courts, that simply has to be accepted by political actors in order to ensure the proper functioning of the Constitution," says Philippe Lagassé, a Carleton University professor who is an expert on Canada's parliamentary system of government.

And the extra pay and honour of being Speaker might prompt one BC Liberal to sit as an independent and be elected by the NDP-Green majority.

Don't expect treachery

Lastly, the rumour that the BC Liberals might entice a Green or NDP MLA to cross the floor and support a Clark government is unsubstantiated, possibly illegal and highly improbable.

Technically speaking, it is a criminal offence to offer an inducement to an elected official to do anything, even though occasionally one changes parties and sometimes ends up in cabinet.

More practically, every NDP and Green MLA publicly signed an agreement to form or support an NDP government — imagine the reaction in that MLA's riding if they switched sides before the legislature could even sit.

Think back to when then-Liberal MP for Vancouver-Kingsway David Emerson went from being "Stephen Harper's worst nightmare" before the 2006 election to one of his cabinet ministers months later. There was ferocious anger and protests in his riding at what was seen as an opportunistic act of betrayal. (In February, Clark named Emerson BC's special envoy in the softwood lumber dispute with the US.)

Any NDP or Green MLA would become an exile in their own community for accepting Liberal entreaties to join their insufficient ranks in order to keep Clark as premier.

Without question BC politics can be the wildest and most unpredictable in Canada, and the new NDP-Green agreement is yet another example.

But the odds of a stable NDP government for 18 to 24 months is a decent bet — and a far better one than Christy Clark still being BC Liberal leader by then.

This article is reprinted with permission of the author. It first appeared as a shorter article in 24 Hours Vancouver and then in a longer one in The Tyee.

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Art Farquharson photo

On International Workers' Day, in Victoria, 2017, marchers show solidarity with community support workers by streaming around the grounds of the Royal Jubilee Hospital. Here you see hospital security trying to block their path. But the weight of the marchers' presence wouldn't be denied. They marched right past without further incident. It was a successful day of song, solidarity and speech from the Raging Grannies, Carlos Flores, Mackenzie Orcheron, Bob Wilson, Sharon Hazelwood and Alan O'Dean.

It's our opinion

Democracy: Best taken in proportion

If you happen across a document entitled *Confidence and Supply Agreement between the BC Greens and New Democrats*, and have trouble suppressing a yawn, we won't blame you. But we'll ask you to try a bit harder. Give the *Agreement* a second look. Its style will no doubt prove every bit as stodgy as you anticipated, but its substance will soon have you jumping up and shouting halleluiah.

Here, after 16 years of lost opportunities and shattered dreams, is a fairly expansive wish list for progressives in our province—and one whose items we stand a better-than-negligible chance of ticking off. Serious climate action. Affordable housing. Restored funding for education. More comprehensive healthcare. A fifteen-dollar minimum wage. The *sine qua non*, however, which the *Agreement* rightfully places at the top of the list, is none of the above. It's "making our democracy work".

We all know that democratic institutions are in rough shape across much of the globe, their legitimacy eroded, their very survival threatened by an alarming resurgence of demagoguery and authoritarianism. A shot in the arm is urgently needed.

Fortunately, the remedy prescribed in the *Agreement* has proven effective in 92 countries on six continents. You'll find it dispensed under the generic name "Proportional Representation" (PR).

Now the wise physician, needless to say, does not administer a treatment before diagnosing the illness she intends it to cure. In the present instance, that would be our antiquated and unfair voting system, known to the experts as Single-Member Plurality and to us common folk as "First Past the Post" (FPTP). We politely call it democratic, yet it's a system that thwarts the will of the electorate more often than not, routinely allowing parties with 40 percent of the popular vote to capture 55 percent of the seats in parliament and 100 percent of the power.

Small wonder that voter turnout is on the decline, considering that FPTP takes about half the votes we cast out of the ballot box and, for all practical purposes, flushes them down the toilet.

Take Saanich South, to mention but one example, where some 11,921 voters gave NDP incumbent Lana Popham the plurality in the May 9 election, thereby assuring her victory. Well and good. One cheer for democracy. Kudos for Ms. Popham as well, who is a capable and dedicated MLA.

But what about the 16,152 electors in the riding who cast ballots for Ms. Popham's opponents? What have they to show for the effort they made to participate in the democratic process? Zilch. Nada. Diddly-squat. Their votes were counted, but their votes didn't count.

Let's pretend for a moment that all those thousands of would-be electors, who succeeded in electing nobody, had spared themselves the bother. Suppose they went pubbing instead, or just stayed home and put their feet up. What earthly difference would it have made?

With a proportional system, by contrast, the vast majority of votes affect the outcome. The moment a jurisdiction adopts PR, therefore, so-called "strategic" voting abruptly loses its *raison d'être* and falls into disuse, the relic of a bygone age.

With newfound confidence, the elector aims to secure the government she hopes for, not merely to ward off the government she fears. No longer are there any "safe seats" that parties and leaders can afford to ignore. No longer are there any "swing ridings" on which they can afford to lavish disproportionate attention or expenditure.

Within a couple of election cycles, minorities gain something approaching the representation their numbers warrant, and the percentage of women holding public office typically rises several points.

Having said this much, however, we'll have done with preaching to the choir. Instead, we'll ask the choir (meaning *you*, of course, dear readers) to come to practice, and to sing out of the same hymn book for a change. For PR in our province is by no means a done deal. The *Agreement* provides that the question will be put before the voters in a referendum in the autumn of 2018. That's not far off, and as PR advocates learned in 2005 and again in 2009, losing such a referendum is a lot easier than winning one. Unless we pull together this time, we may rack up yet a third defeat, one that could take electoral reform off the agenda for decades to come.

Meanwhile, both parties to the *Agreement* promise "to consult British Columbians" concerning "the form of PR that will be put to a referendum". Aye, there's the rub. For PR, you see, is not one-size-fits-all; it comes in two or three distinct varieties. Each variety has its pros and cons, and each is sufficiently complex to defy explanation in a tweet or a sound bite. News flash: Democracy ain't a walk in the park.

What this boils down to is that we've got some homework to do. Why not get a jump on it, then? Start boning up right off the bat. Maybe you'll hit on a form of PR that really floats your boat, in which case by all means get out there and plump for it.

But it's good to have a backup plan, so learn what you can about the other systems too. The one thing we don't want to do is let the perfect be the enemy of the good. So keep your hymn book handy, and remember that whichever lyric finds its way into the referendum question, that's the one to learn by heart.

-- P.G.B.

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As others see it**The incredible shrinking role of government in BC**

By Alex Hemingway

During an election, pundits and political parties tend to focus on spending promises. But the attention on spending makes it easy to forget that we've actually witnessed an incredible shrinking of government's role in BC over the past 15 years. Unlike the strange mist that shrinks Scott Carey in the 1957 sci-fi classic, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, the cause of BC's shrinking public sector is not so mysterious.

Today, we are spending just 18.4 percent of BC's total economic pie (GDP) on government programs and services compared to 21.1 percent in 2000. BC's 2017 budget projects a further drop to 17.5 percent by 2019.

That means that if we dedicate the same share of BC's nearly \$270 billion economy to public spending today as we did in 2000 we could make additional investments of approximately \$7 billion annually.

Some celebrate this shrinking act, but many British Columbians understand its consequences: a housing affordability crisis, job growth concentrated in the Vancouver and Victoria regions, education and health systems stretched to their limits, damaging levels of poverty and inequality, and a deepening climate change emergency.

What do these challenges have in common? In order to solve them, we must act on a societal level not just as individuals and families. CCPA research shows that tackling these challenges is well within our grasp and policy solutions are at our fingertips. All we need are political will and resources to be unleashed.

Failing to make these investments costs us enormously year after year. Our research shows that poverty costs the BC economy \$8-9 billion annually – more than double the cost of a comprehensive poverty reduc-

tion plan. We have also shown that public, universal child care would largely pay for itself, providing relief to young families facing astronomical costs for both housing and child care.

Investing in a public universal pharmaceutical program would also benefit British Columbians whose drug costs are largely privatized. University of BC Professor Steve Morgan estimates that Canada will waste approximately \$100 billion over the next decade compared to if we launched a universal program now.

Ironically, the shrinking role of government means we often end up wasting more money on a societal level by failing to make crucial public investments.

There is growing recognition of the need – and genuine possibility – for major reinvestment for public good. Even deeply conservative institutions like the International Monetary Fund highlight that inequality damages economic growth and mounting research shows how inequality tears at our social fabric.

There is also increasing understanding of the limits of an unfettered, unregulated marketplace. We've seen this lesson unfold dramatically in global financial crises, the climate change emergency, housing unaffordability, and inexcusable levels of poverty and inequality.

We need to rebuild BC's public sector, not shrink it. We can make our tax system fair and pool our resources to meet the challenges we face. The alternative is to allow these problems to fester and watch our social fabric fray.

Alex Hemingway is CCPA-BC's Public Finance Policy Analyst. His work focuses on the state of BC's public services, including education, healthcare, social services and regulation. He also investigates the taxation system and its relationship to inequality and the capacity of government to provide high-quality and accessible public services.

“
People voted
overwhelmingly for
a new government,
and we are ready
to give them one.”

-John Horgan

BC NDP

A sign of
the times!

Mainstream media put forth dangerously misleading theories about Clark's options

Dear Editor,

I have an inherited interest in the phenomenon of minority government, thanks to my late father, the constitutional expert and Senator Eugene Forsey. It has been fascinating to follow the situation resulting from the BC election, and many of us across the rest of the country are excited and inspired by what is happening in your province.

However, when the election results were finalized, much of the mainstream media coverage was dangerously misleading in regard to what Premier Clark's options were at that point. The *Globe and Mail* and the CBC were among those who put forth the erroneous theory that Clark had the "option" to advise the lieutenant-governor that *another election was*

needed, since, in her view, no party could form a sustainable government.

That coverage implied that it would be legitimate, even perhaps routine, for Premier Clark to have asked for a fresh election at that point, without the newly elected legislature even having had the chance to meet. But such a request would have been an almost unprecedented outrage. Without facing the Assembly and winning a confidence vote, no premier has the right to "advise" the Lieutenant-Governor on anything.

The Lieutenant-Governor's role, like that of the Governor-General, is *to protect the absolute right of the newly elected Assembly (provincial legislature or House of Commons) to decide who shall govern*. If a premier did try to "advise" a fresh election, the Lieutenant-Governor

would be obliged to use her reserve power and refuse that illegitimate "advice".

In parliamentary democracy, choosing the government is what my father called the elected legislature's "most essential function". For a premier or prime minister to try to usurp that role in order to avoid losing a confidence vote is profoundly subversive. In the whole history of our nation, only two prime ministers have had the gall to try it: Mackenzie King in 1926, when Lord Byng very properly refused to comply, and Stephen Harper in 2008, when Michaëlle Jean knuckled under on his prorogation request and condemned the country to two and a half years of illegitimate Conservative rule.

To frame a request for dissolution as one of Clark's "options" immediately after the election makes such a request sound

legitimate or valid, even commonplace – just another decision to be made on political grounds. It is not, nor should it ever be considered so. The newly elected members of the legislature must have the chance to do the work they were elected to do, not have the rug pulled out from under them if the sitting premier doesn't like the election results.

British Columbians have made their voices heard in the election. They have a right to the correct information about how our constitutional system works, so that no "jack-in-office" will ever be allowed to usurp the rightful role of the representatives the people have elected.

Helen Forsey
Omphah, Ontario

Where would we position ourselves on that ladder?

Most of us have grown up with a capitalist worldview which makes a virtue and goal out of accumulation, consumption, and collecting. It's hard for us to see this as an unsustainable and unhappy trap because all of our rooms are decorated in this same color. It is the only obvious story line that our children see. "I produce therefore I am" and "I consume therefore I am" might be today's answers to Descartes' "I think therefore I am." These identities are all terribly mistaken.

This foundational way of seeing has blinded us so that we now tend to falsely assume more is better. The course we are on assures us of a predictable future of strained

individualism, severe competition as resources dwindle for a growing population, and perpetual war. Our culture ingrains in us the belief that there isn't enough to go around.

This determines much if not most of our politics. In the United States there is never enough for health care, education, the arts, or basic infrastructure. The largest budget is always for war, bombs, and military gadgets. We might make the same comment of our own country, Canada, as more and more of our political leaders adopt this same dogma as they strive for prominence and success.

E. F. Schumacher said years ago,

"Small is beautiful," and many other wise people have come to know that less stuff invariably leaves room for more soul. In fact, possessions and soul seem to operate in inverse proportion to one another. Only through simplicity can we find deep contentment instead of perpetually striving and living unsatisfied.

This makes the recent attention given to the Roman Catholic Pope Francis' visit by US President Donald Trump of interest. Trump is now the quintessential embodiment of the American way -- "Make America Great Again" -- while Pope Francis has become an expression of a completely other way of being.

Francis knows that climbing ladders to nowhere would never make us happy nor create peace and justice on this earth. Too many have to stay at the bottom of the ladder so the few of us can be at the top. That's a recipe for eventual disaster. Francis understands that; Trump hasn't a clue. Other world-famous leaders and spokespeople have recognized and lived out such a life-affirming credo.

One wonders -- if we were asked, where would we position ourselves?

Dale Perkins
Victoria, BC

Let's keep reworking existing communities or creating new ones

By Dale Perkins

Richard Rohr Meditation: Simplicity

At this moment I realize we are all living at a critical time, when the option of having life continue, more or less as it has unfolded to date, is in a direct and unavoidable collision with the End Times (as described in many religious dogmas and doctrines).

Every one of the usual excuses for disparities and conflicts are now seen as highly suspect, i.e., racial and ethnic advantages, regional advantages as well, inherited financial privileges, accidents of birth, etc. The essential issue remains -- will we continue to insist that everyone can occupy the big picture or must all of us simply disappear because we can't, i.e., all humankind die.

It's that blatant. Either we believe that some of us are permitted to be spared the horrible demise foretold while others simply must recognize the reality of built-in disparities and be content with knowing they cannot hope to continue living on this planet.

We might wonder -- if only those "others" had been smarter and better aligned themselves with us privileged folk, then they could have lived on as well. But alas, that doesn't seem to be possible now.

There have been significant skirmishes in the past with collateral damage mostly inflicted on the "losers", but Life has continued and gradually improvements have crept into the human condition. That has made it possible for us to maintain the illusion that life will continue into the foreseeable future, and we should be content with making minor adjustments, knowing that "all will be well" either in this life or the next.

Today I read *The Earth Charter* with its 14 pages of analysis and prophecies. It desperately tries to be positive and hopeful, even while delineating the many serious threats present today. It would be possible, and indeed satisfying for some, to critique what the authors have written. I agree with much of their analysis and prescriptions of what must happen if we sincerely wish to extend the human story.

It is written very carefully and thoughtfully. However like most of the prophetic utterances out there now, a stark failure of this Charter is its unwillingness to be honest or realistic about human evil and the old foibles of greed and selfishness.

If or when significant numbers refuse to accept and adopt the fine principles outlined in the Charter, will there be consequences imposed by the rest of the population? I read about No. 1 -- "respect and care for the community of life" and No. 4 -- Democracy, Non Violence and Peace -- and wondered -- what happens when significant numbers do not "uphold the right ... support the local ... promote, protect and institute effective and efficient access" and what about "eliminating corruption", and, and, and ... I realize it's better to be articulating noble values and principles, than "cursing the darkness" but what if a significant body of people say "No!" to these principles? Can they be coerced into adopting them in order that all of us live?

Grounding the Charter is the conviction that a majority can agree and live out those principles and simply overwhelm the "others" who cannot or will not live them out. It would appear that there won't be any need for police, or military, or incarceration imposed by courts, or guns, weapons of mass destruction, etc. It all rests on having faith in the inherent goodness of each one of us that is stronger than the need of some to hurt others, compete, defend ourselves against, torture, kill, and incarcerate ... those who won't play the game according to these enlightened standards, regulations and laws. What a statement of faith! And what an exceptional declaration that would be. Do we really believe that it's possible?

That is what prevents me from subscribing wholeheartedly to this alternative

vision -- I long for such a simple declaration or statement of faith. I readily acknowledge that much of the time I don't have that depth of faith that would induce me to spend the remaining years I have living out that vision. I dearly would love it if I and my neighbours had a faith that would empower us to claim such a fantastic vision, but I rarely do. I would happily embrace George Bernard Shaw's signature line -- "I want to be thoroughly used up when I die" -- Oh that I might discover such a compelling faith I could thoroughly use up my remaining years pursuing. That would be the kind of community worth living and dying for. May it be so (Amen).

"The work undertaken by Lionel Tiger and Mark McGuire tells us that communities gathered around socialization ritual and belief are strong and have incredible brain-soothing effects on us -- effects that can alleviate much of the brain-poisoning stress of our lives. That should be reason enough to gather people together and try to recreate those environments.

Innovative communities that connect people together intentionally (socialization), lift humane values into a position of chosen yet vulnerable authority (beliefs), and create stories, symbols, and actions (ritual) that remind each individual he or she is a beautiful part of a cohesive whole will accomplish the goal. ... "Whenever it is already happening in a sustained and engaging way, people are being invited to grow.

"Let's keep doing that - either reworking existing communities or creating new ones -- and then let's keep them as clean as we can." -- Gretta Vosper

Dale Perkins is a retired church minister living in Victoria.

Friends of the Lower Island News

When I last wrote this column, it was six weeks until the election. Now it is six weeks and more since the election and we're still waiting to see what will happen next in the Legislature. Just think of how fascinating it would be to be a reporter in the Press Gallery there! My ambition when I first entered the world of journalism, but unfortunately then they didn't allow women in the press gallery. Yes, it was a long, long time ago! And how things have changed since then.

One thing that doesn't change, however, is the need to ask you, our readers for help financially. Mailing costs as you know have skyrocketed and like many publications we are constantly scraping the the bottom of our financial barrel.

That being said, all of us volunteers who work on the *Lower Island News* are truly grateful for the generosity of our Friends of the LIN who continue to send us cheques to help keep the paper going. Thank you from all of us at LIN

If you like this issue of LIN, want it to continue to be published, and can afford to give something, please consider becoming a supporting donor and send us a cheque, whatever amount you can afford. All donations will be appreciated.

Donations may be sent to the Lower Island News Society at Box 311, 2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC V8T 4E8 and will be acknowledged in the paper. Please indicate if you prefer to be "anonymous". Unfortunately we can't take credit card donations or give tax receipts. Thank you!

Dale Young, Editor, for the Editorial Board

We welcome your letters to the editor, as well as articles and reviews, photos, and anything else you think would be of interest to our progressive readers. The next issue of the *Lower Island News* will likely be in September. The deadline for submitting advertising and articles for the next issue will be around September 1.

For further information and to obtain advertising rates, please email dale_young@telus.net or phone 250-384-7621.

Beyond optics, towards politics: a report back from CLC Convention

By Joel Harden, CUPE Local 1281

At its best, the recent 28th Constitutional Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress demonstrated how far unions have come on Indigenous rights, Palestinian rights (more on that later), racism, queer or trans rights, mental health, and environmental justice. Delegates made passionate appeals to support these and other important struggles.

Impressive speakers like Angela Davis, Candy Palmater, Cindy Blackstock and Mary Walsh argued unions must champion issues suppressed by powerful insiders. Heartfelt videos acknowledged former CLC President Bob White, outgoing Secretary-Treasurer Barb Byers, the 25-year anniversary of the 1992 Westray Mine disaster, and the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. On the fourth day of CLC Convention, a union "street party" occupied Bay and King Streets, the heart of Canada's financial district.

At its worst, the 28th CLC Convention also illustrated the limited thinking that exists in union circles, particularly at the leadership level. Election leaflets festooned the halls making few, if any, specific promises.

A 5 percent pay increase (indexed to inflation) was approved for CLC leaders who currently earn over three times the average wage in Canada, despite stiff opposition from convention delegates. UNIFOR (the largest private sector union) and Local 113

of the Amalgamated Transit Union continued their public feud after an attempted raid by UNIFOR failed earlier this year. Premier Rachel Notley arrived to celebrate achievements made by the NDP government in Alberta, but ended with a pitch for export-driven oil pipelines, the impact of which would undermine current efforts in Canada to meet global climate change targets.

At a time when organized labour faces existential challenges, these optics at union conventions leave many cold. Before going to the 28th CLC Convention, I canvassed my Facebook contacts to see who else was attending, and this reply earned the most praise: "I'll be raking leaves in my yard during CLC Convention, which is likely to add more to the class struggle." Ouch.

While such cynicism is understandable, I'll offer another perspective here. Yes, union conventions are spaces where top-down strategies get used for particular outcomes, but they are also moments where activists can shift beyond optics to politics. With the right strategy, activists can organize, appeal for support, and advance important work. Two examples from the 28th CLC Convention help illustrate this point.

The first was an emergency resolution urging the CLC to support a hunger strike of 1500 Palestinian prisoners in Israel that started on April 17, 2017. At the CLC Convention, this resolution was promoted by a network of delegates and earned 15 endorsements, including the CLC's Canadian Council (a decision-making body that meets daily at the CLC Convention, and four times a year). When the resolution hit convention floor, it was attacked by some as anti-Semitism, and an unfair targeting of Israel. But after a spirited debate, the resolution passed. CLC President Hassan Yussuff's ruling on this outcome was challenged from the floor, but the challenge was defeated.

Thanks to grassroots organizing, the CLC took a clear position on a Palestinian-led human rights campaign for the first time in its history. It also joined the International Trade Union Confederation (representing 176 million workers worldwide) and other unions to send a clear message to Israel, and the corporations involved in Israel's prison system.

In a related effort, union activists inspired by the Leap



Angela Davis speaks to the Canadian Labour Congress convention. Photo by CLC.

Manifesto organized a forum over lunch after Premier Notley addressed CLC Convention. Their intent was to discuss ideas that ensured no worker was left behind by climate change, and to seek alliances with energy workers in doing so. People wanted specific proposals for green jobs (beyond general concepts like "just transition"), and were concerned Premier Notley's push for pipelines might divide union activists concerned about the climate crisis.

The Leap forum drew 50 participants, many of whom intervened later during the convention's panel on green jobs. In that debate, Ken Smith (president of UNIFOR Local 707A, representing 6000 energy workers in Fort McMurray) declared he was "undecided" on pipelines, but was convinced "there are no jobs on a dead planet". Carolyn Egan, president of the Steelworker Toronto Area Council, said "transition [to a new energy economy] is inevitable, but justice is not". Kim Fry, an elementary teacher activist in Ontario, declared it was time for unions to fight for a new energy future, and that starts by rejecting the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure.

Interestingly enough, Fry ran into Premier Notley later that afternoon, and wrote about their conversation on Facebook:

This exchange demonstrates the importance of grassroots unionism, and how it can impact larger forces. When Premier Notley spoke at the Federal NDP Convention last year in Edmonton, her pipeline pitch earned a standing ovation. At the CLC Convention last week, it drew tepid applause.

Why? The work of climate justice campaigners is a major factor, along with the continued evidence of climate change. The climate drivers behind recent floods in

Another Delegate's Comment: The Missing Ingredient

By Julius Arcsott, OPSEU Executive Board Member, and organizer, Workers' Action Movement.

Missing at the CLC convention was a critical element: an organized class struggle left wing. Such a radical caucus could unite militant workers, speak to issues, try to amend resolutions, even run candidates on a socialist platform.

Some small break-time meetings did occur. One was a forum hosted by Avi Lewis to discuss the pro-environmental, anti-capitalist LEAP Manifesto. Another, organized by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, discussed creating links between organized labour and community grassroots organizations -- a theme addressed by the CLC bureaucracy the next day.

Neither of these meetings, however, led to any effort to form an organized left wing in the labour movement to challenge the status quo. In fact, in the latter case, organizers asked that the actual convention proceedings not be discussed as it might upset some union officials.

Needed now more than ever is an organized left wing, similar to initiatives on a modest scale in OSSTF and OPSEU, to oppose concessions bargaining and the austerity agenda of the Bay Street political parties, as well as to fight for democracy in our labour movement.

Efforts by Socialist Action during the convention were well received by delegates who bought over 100 copies of SA newspaper and accepted many more copies of *Turn Left* magazine. The SA booth in the Exhibitors' area, alongside affiliated unions and labour allies, welcomed many visitors.

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The VLC, representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meetings the third Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, at the BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street.
All delegates are invited to come out and meet the Executive: Mike Eso, President; Stan Dzbik, Treasurer; Robin Toszczak, Secretary

Ontario and Quebec were on peoples' minds, as were the deplorable conditions in many Indigenous communities impacted by fossil fuels projects. Delegates at the CLC Convention entered that context with grassroots organizing, and this contributed to a shift in opinions of Premier Notley's plans for Alberta. Notley is now publicly campaigning to ensure the BC government doesn't become a pipeline opponent.

All of which is to say: union conventions matter, and how they are utilized by activists and movements matters. The unions our grandmothers and grandfathers built must not be left to those concerned only with optics, however sincere their intentions may be. Our unions need better politics, and activists prepared to fight for them.

CLC President Hassan Yussuff's re-election flyer

Re-elect Réélisez
Hassan Yussuff
Three years ago, I had a tough decision to make: Was I going to challenge the status quo at the Canadian Labour Congress, and make a run for the Presidency?
An incumbent had never been unseated, and a worker of colour had never been elected to this level of leadership in the Canadian labour movement.
Hassan2017.ca
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Working Together. Getting Results.

10 questions to challenge NDP leadership candidates

By Barry Weisleder

In the Fall of 2016 left wing activists in the labour-based New Democratic Party of Canada launched an independent campaign to draft Sid Ryan, past president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, to run for Leader of the federal NDP.

On a website, the campaign team posted a 17-point socialist policy platform to serve as the basis for his candidacy, and to influence all registered candidates in the race for NDP Leader. Over 20,000 people visited the site to read the platform and/or to see one or more videos featuring Ryan speaking on political issues.

For personal reasons, Ryan decided on April 26, 2017 not to run. We respect his decision.

Still, the need for socialist leadership and a new direction for the NDP is urgent. Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the new Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer, and most of all, the big business ruling class must be challenged from the left.

To advance that prospect the NDP Socialist Caucus decided to pose 10 Questions and to challenge the registered candidates to state clearly where they stand on those issues and the 17-point platform. Based on the responses we get, the Socialist Caucus will seriously consider whether to support one or none of the contenders.

At the same time, the SC continues to protest the undemocratic entry fees and rules imposed by NDP officials that unduly restrict who can run to be federal Leader.

The NDP Socialist Caucus, founded in 1998, is the organized left wing of North America's only mass, working class political party. The SC has hundreds of members and supporters across the country who actively participate in the NDP at all levels. It played a pivotal role in launching the leadership review in 2016 that is forcing NDP federal Leader Tom Mulcair to step aside at the conclusion of the present leadership race in October 2017.

The SC persuaded the party to demand Canadian Forces out of Afghanistan in 2006. It got the party at its 2016 federal convention to launch a national discussion of the Leap Manifesto. In April of this year it successfully pushed the Ontario NDP, at its convention, to embrace public pharma care, dental care, the re-nationalization of Hydro One, and free post-secondary education.

In a federal leadership race dominated, so far, by the politics of identity, a race in which the political differences between the candidates are often blurred, the SC endeavours to put the focus on policy and on issues that matter most to the working class -- to marginalized, alienated and disenfranchised people. To that end, it calls on all the registered candidates for Leader to answer the 10 Questions, directly, clearly and without delay.

Here are the 10 Questions. Please copy and share them widely:

1. The benefits of robotization and new technologies generally should be shared, not utilized to make the owners super rich and to drive more workers into poverty. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will fight for a reduction in the work week without a loss in pay or benefits?

2. About 235,000 Canadians become homeless every year, with 35,000 sleeping in shelters and on the streets on any given night. 1.7 million are unable to afford adequate,

Half of single BC seniors living on \$25K or less per year

Study details alarming rise in economic insecurity among BC seniors; single women at highest risk

VANCOUVER -- Poverty and economic insecurity among BC seniors is growing, according to a study released April 6 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. After rapid declines over the 1970s, 80s and 90s, seniors' poverty rose from a low of 2.2% in 1996 to 12.7% in 2014 (the most recent year data is available)—and many more seniors have incomes just above the poverty line.

The rise is mainly driven by the 28% of seniors who live alone. Single *women* face a particularly high risk of economic insecurity in old age. A staggering one-third of single senior women live below the poverty line.

The higher risk of poverty for women is driven by gender inequality in the job mar-

ket, which translates into unequal pension income in old age. The typical senior woman in BC receives 21% less income from the Canada Pension Plan than the typical man. Women are also less likely to have access to private retirement income, including employer-sponsored pensions and RRSPs, and those who do receive 45% less on average than men.

These are among the key findings of *Poverty and Inequality Among British Columbia's Seniors*, which takes a close look at BC's senior population using Statistics Canada data on income and wealth alongside other indicators of economic insecurity.

"We often see stories that pit generations against one another—with seniors described as a homogenous group of well-off retirees," said lead author **Iglika Ivanova**, an economist at the CCPA-BC. "Our research shows this isn't the case. While BC seniors are doing okay on average, looking only at the averages misses the big picture

of income and wealth inequality."

Ivanova points to differences in wealth as an example. While seniors have higher average wealth than working-age families, a closer look reveals that this average is driven up by a wealthy few. The poorest 20% of senior households in Canada had a median wealth of only \$15,000 in 2012, while for the top 20% it was over \$1.6 million.

The study also reveals blind spots in the way we look at seniors' economic insecurity. While many access benefits that keep them out of poverty, the large number of single seniors just above the poverty line means they still struggle with low income, especially when facing higher health care expenses due to chronic illness or disability, or when they don't own their homes and are subject to the whims of BC's increasingly unaffordable rental market.

Senior households experience core housing need at the same rate as working-age households (15 percent). But the rate is much higher among those who rent—42 percent of senior renters experience core housing need, compared to 29 percent of non-senior renters.

"The story that emerges is not a new one," said Ivanova. "The defining problem we face isn't about intergenerational inequality, but rather the growing gap between rich and poor that shows up across generations. And in all age groups, gender, immigration status and ethnicity exacerbate those divides."

The report recommends a number of solutions, including a poverty reduction plan, increased public investment in home and community care, further expansion of the Canada Pension Plan and addressing the gender-wage gap to make sure today's working-age women do not face an elevated risk of poverty when they become seniors.

suitable shelter. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will demand the construction of half a million quality social housing units by means of a publicly-owned land assembly and housing construction enterprise?

3. For decades, NDP leaders have gone along with the New Cold War against Russia and China, and backed western military intervention abroad, including the bombing of Libya. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will demand that Canada get out of NATO immediately?

4. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will actively support the world-wide campaign backed by unions and parliamentary bodies to effect Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the Zionist apartheid state until its occupation of the West Bank ends?

5. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will demand a steeply progressive tax system, including the following measures:

a) Tax Capital Gains Income at the same rate as employment income, bringing in \$8 billion dollars

b) Increase the Corporate Tax rate from 15% to 21%, bringing in \$9 billion dollars

c) Eliminate corporate stock options as a benefit, with a net savings of \$600 million

d) Cut Justin Trudeau's "middle class tax cut" and enhance the Guaranteed Income Supplement and Child Benefits, and

e) Increase income tax for earners with income over \$200,000 to 40%, and for earners with income over \$900,000 to 50%.

6. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will demand greatly expanded public ownership and economic democracy to include Canada's railway system, major hydro, oil, gas and other energy corporations, the giant telecoms, and at least two of the major banks?

7. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will fight for a Green Industrial Revolution to shift rapidly from carbon and nuclear energy towards safe, clean and renewable energy technologies, and that this rapid transition be funded by conscripting the profits of big oil and gas, and put a high priority on the employment of displaced, indigenous and young workers?

8. For indigenous peoples, it's time not just for "reconciliation" but restitution. If diamond mining corporations in the north can provide their employees world class housing, food, healthcare and recreation, they should do no less for Canada's original peoples who deserve to share the wealth that has been plundered, or the resource extraction firms should face expropriation. Do you agree with that, and commit to a policy of No More Pipelines?

9. The NDP should be transformed from a mainly electoral machine into a vast social movement that fosters greater democracy. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will partner with unions and social justice groups, ensure more time for policy debate at its conventions, and make them more accessible rather than use them chiefly as a fundraising exercise? Do you commit to end the present practice that allows party leaders to ignore adopted policies? Do you commit to increase funding of Electoral District Associations and put an end to top-down interference with local candidate nominations?

10. Do you commit that under your leadership the NDP will fight for a national Pharmacare and Dental Care program, and a national \$10 a day quality childcare service, to be funded by steeply progressive taxation?

We want answers. The **NDP Socialist Caucus** is posing questions to the registered candidates for federal NDP Leader because we think that party members deserve to know where the candidates stand – beyond vague generalities and broad slogans. Do you agree? Would you like to help? See the SC's 17-point platform for socialist leadership at:

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Thank you, Maurine Karagianis,
for your 21 years of standing up
for our community,
and your passionate advocacy as our MLA
on behalf of all British Columbians!

Stay in touch! (esqmetndp@gmail.com)
Your Esquimalt-Metchosin Executive

Liberals refuse to explain decision to kill salmon education program

OTTAWA – Under questioning from the NDP June 5, the Liberal Minister for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Dominic LeBlanc, refused to explain why his government eliminated an in-school education program that teaches children about the life cycle of salmon.

"For a salmon dependent region like BC to lose this cost effective program is shameful," said Fin Donnelly, the NDP's critic for Fisheries and Oceans, in Question Period on June 5. "Can the Minister provide a clear explanation of why he made the reckless decision to kill the salmon-in-the-classroom program?"

For the last 40 years, the *Stream to Sea*

program provided hands-on learning to children in schools across British Columbia.

Donnelly also delivered a letter to Minister LeBlanc which explains how the program provided students with a direct connection to a foundational resource, a physical link to a major component of BC culture as well as a greater understanding of First Nations communities, who depend on salmon.

LeBlanc refused to answer the NDP's questions and instead tried to downplay the program cancellation as funding "re-allocation". The NDP has vowed to fight the decision and pressure the government to restore full funding for the program.

NDP blasts Liberal government's failure on West coast salmon

OTTAWA – In the House of Commons, June 1, the NDP's Gord Johns blasted the Liberal government for cancelling the Stream to Sea education program and failing to protect west coast salmon:

"The Liberal government's decision to cancel this program is a slap in the face to British Columbians.

Salmon is critical to our economy, our

food security, our environment as well as the livelihood and culture of First Nations People.

This short-sighted and irresponsible decision comes in the middle of a massive reduction of this year's sockeye run.

"Why is this Liberal government abandoning our salmon?" Johns asked.

NDP MP Sheila Malcolmson urges PM Trudeau to immediately reinstate Coast Guard dive team

OTTAWA – In mid May, the federal government announced they will shut down the Coast Guard's only emergency diving team specialized in search and rescue. The lack of an emergency dive team would make BC's coast less prepared to respond to emergencies, and could lead to death,

May 29 in the House of Commons, Nanaimo-Ladysmith MP Sheila Malcolmson condemned the Liberal government's reckless and dangerous decision to disband the life-saving team of professional divers and asked the government to reconsider.

"As BC begins its busy boating season,

the Liberal government is shutting down the Coast Guard's only emergency dive team specialized in search and rescue. The last time the Liberals cut this dive team, 15 years ago, it led to deaths on our coast" said Malcolmson. "Have the Liberals learned nothing from their past mistakes? Why are they killing this emergency service that keeps our coast safe? Will the Prime Minister reconsider his terrible decision?"

Malcolmson is also calling on the government to restore funding and resources to Coast Guard services, including reopening the Comox Coast Guard MCTS base and making the Coast Guard responsible for directing the removal of abandoned vessels.



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NDP MP demands fair ferry fares for local commuters

OTTAWA – While the fallout from the federal Liberal's disappointing second budget unfolds, the unexpected cut to the federal tax credit for public transit passes will hit the pockets of BC Ferries commuters particularly hard.

Today in the House of Commons, Nanaimo-Ladysmith MP Sheila Malcolmson stood and demanded the Liberals restore this important rebate and make life more affordable for ferry commuters.

Malcolmson said, "The Liberal budget removed an important transit rebate.

In my riding of Nanaimo – Ladysmith, coastal ferry users were greatly aided by this tax credit.

"Given the BC Liberals hiked coastal ferry fares at over 10 times the rate of inflation, the federal rebate cut the cost of daily ferry travel, and helped make ends meet.

"For a government who talks a lot about how it supports the middle class, this move doesn't make any sense.

"Will the Liberals reconsider, and restore this important rebate?"

Liberals "rudderless" on abandoned vessels

OTTAWA – After years of the NDP calling for an action plan to clean up abandoned vessels on our coast, the Liberals announced May 31 a program that barely scratches the surface.

"After missing their own deadline, the Liberals unveiled a rudderless plan that simply cannot address the thousands of vessels abandoned on our coasts," said NDP MP Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo-Ladysmith).

The Liberal plan lacks any measures to improve vessel registration, build a vessel turn-in program, get taxpayers off the hook

for clean ups, or support local marine salvage businesses. Additionally, the lack of resources included in the plan is dwarfed by what's required for vessel removal.

"The cost of removing just one vessel in Ladysmith was more than the annual budget for vessel removal," said Malcolmson. "It's a drop in the bucket."

Last month, Malcolmson tabled Bill C-352 in Parliament that would create a comprehensive coast-wide strategy to clean up abandoned vessels, which pose significant economic and environmental risks to coastal communities.

Liberals must offer protections for Chechen refugees

OTTAWA — Following reports of hundreds of gay men being imprisoned, tortured and murdered in Chechnya, New Democrats are calling on the Liberal government to call for an international investigation into this horrific treatment and also offer refugee protection for the men who manage to escape from the region.

After pressing the Liberals to join international counterparts in condemning the campaign of mass arrests and detention of gay men in Chechnya and to call for an international inquiry into the same persecution, the Liberals finally responded by asking the Russians to investigate," said NDP LGBTQ critic, Randall Garrison. "That simply is not good enough. The government must call for an independent international inquiry. Canadians expect the Liberals to

stand up against LGBTQ persecution."

Two weeks ago, Russian news sources reported on the imprisonment of more than one hundred gay men in concentration camp style prisons in Chechnya. Faced with torture, humiliation, and abuse, it was confirmed that at least three of these men died. The NDP has stood in Parliament to call on the Liberals to condemn this appalling persecution.

The Liberals must not only condemn the Chechen government's action, they should also extend Canadian protections to the men escaping these human rights violations," added NDP Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship critic, Jenny Kwan. "It's clear that the Canadian government should offer full refugee status for those who manage to escape this horrendous situation.

New NDP bill would crack down on tax cheats

While the Liberal government fails to keep their promise on transparency of tax evasion investigations, the NDP is proposing new legislation to help crack down on tax cheats.

"The Liberals are failing to take immediate action to address the issue of tax fairness. They seem perfectly fine with giving sweetheart deals to tax cheats and breaking their promises of transparency when it comes to tax evasion investigations," said Pierre-Luc Dusseault, the NDP's National Revenue Critic, "New Democrats, on the other hand, are serious about cracking down on corporations and wealthy individuals who avoid paying their fair share of taxes."

Based on the work of a top federal tax prosecutor and experts on international

tax avoidance, NDP House Leader Murray Rankin introduced Bill C-362 that would deny tax breaks on a type of banking transaction commonly used in tax avoidance.

"People are abusing Canada's tax system to get tax breaks on transactions that have no real economic value," said Rankin. "Enough with excuses, this type of thing should be stopped immediately and that's what we're proposing today."

Unlike most advanced economies, Canada doesn't require a transaction to have economic substance to qualify for tax benefits. Under the Obama Administration, the United States passed similar legislation to close this loophole. Canadians for Tax Fairness estimates the NDP's changes could recover up to \$400 million in revenue every year.

Legacy Golf Tournament

Imagine helping to end homelessness by golfing and feasting!
Join Cool Aid at Bear Mountain Valley Course on Friday, July 14, starting at 1:30 pm, for the *Legacy Golf Tournament*, a benefit for Victoria Cool Aid Society, presented by Hatch and Muir, which supports the construction of new housing for people who are homeless.

Reserve your place today at DriveToEndHomelessness.ca or call Alan at 250-414-4781. Shuttle service from downtown Victoria is available by request.

For more information, go to www.drivetoendhomelessness.ca and www.CoolAid.org or talk to Dave Fracy, Board member and tournament organizer, who can be reached at 250-953-6816 or dave@hatchmuir.com.

BC's Coast is clearly not a priority for Trudeau

By Randall Garrison

Despite the best efforts of British Columbians who have made their priorities very clear, the Trudeau Liberals have again demonstrated their lack of concern for the BC coast in the past several months. From abruptly cancelling the salmon education program and disbanding the Coast Guard's dive team to reaffirming their decision to approve Kinder Morgan, the Liberals have shown that they are not listening to BC.

New Democrat Members of Parliament, along with hundreds of constituents, have called on the government to reverse these harmful decisions.

The Liberals stand behind Kinder Morgan, despite lack of support

On June 6, the Conservatives put forward a motion which affirmed the purported economic benefits of Kinder Morgan and the claim of social licence for the project to proceed. The Liberals granted the project federal approval in late 2016, despite opposition from First Nations and many other concerned citizens in BC.

All but two Liberal MPs voted in favour of this recent motion and affirmed their support for Kinder Morgan, a project that would trigger a seven-fold increase of tanker traffic through the Salish sea and the strait of Juan de Fuca and pose an immediate risk to the integrity of our coast, the endangered species that live here, and our coastal economy.

My constituents told me very clearly that they do not want this project to go forward, when I conducted a riding-wide poll on the topic and the vast majority responded in opposition to Kinder Morgan. The fact that the Liberals and Conservatives seem to think that there is social licence for this project shows how out-of-touch they are with BC.

New Democrats call on Liberal government to reinstate rescue dive team

In May, the Liberals disbanded the Coast Guard's only team of emergency rescue divers. My New Democrat colleagues and I consider this move reckless and dangerous.

MP Fin Donnelly, NDP Critic for Fisheries and Oceans, has pointed out that the

last time the Liberals cut the coast guard dive team the result was preventable deaths on our coast. New Democrats are surprised that the Liberals have not learned from their past mistakes.

In 2001, the Liberal government cut the Coast Guard Dive team, citing the need to reduce costs. Two days after the cancellation, a vehicle crashed into the Fraser River. The Coast Guard was able to arrive on scene minutes later, but were unable to save the man trapped in his car because they no longer had dive equipment.

Due to political pressure and public backlash, the dive team was reinstated but it took years before the life-saving team was properly supported and allowed to do their important work. Now, just as we are entering the busiest boating season of the year, Justin Trudeau must live up to his promise to improve marine safety in BC and immediately reverse this decision that will result in unnecessary loss of life.

Important salmon education program abruptly cut

For decades, BC schools have enjoyed

the opportunity to teach children about the lifecycles of salmon and the importance of conservation and enhancement efforts. In May, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans suddenly announced that funding for the program would be cut.

Environmentalists, teachers, and students have voiced their concerns, and, once again, it appears that the Trudeau Liberals are not listening to British Columbians. Salmon are an integral part of our lives in BC, and this cost-effective program was valuable to us. New Democrats have called on the Liberal government to immediately reverse this decision and restore funding to the program.

I commend the many activists and community leaders who continue to advocate for our coast, despite our concerns falling on seemingly deaf ears. My New Democrat colleagues and I will continue to stand up for the people of BC's coast and advocate for real coastal protection and safety.

Randall Garrison is Member of Parliament for Juan de Fuca-Saanich-Sooke.

Case for Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline built on faulty assumptions, including tidewater price fiction: study

As Kinder Morgan Canada turned to the stock market to finance its Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (TMEP), a new report by veteran earth scientist David Hughes finds that Alberta oil sold on international markets would likely command a lower price than if sold in North America.

Both the federal and Alberta governments and the oil industry argue that a pipeline to tidewater will unlock new markets (Asia in the case of TMEP) where Canadian oil can command a better price than in the US, where the majority of Canadian oil is currently exported.

"My research shows that Canada's oil is not being unfairly discounted by the US," says Hughes. "Oil prices internationally and in North America are now nearly identical. That means Canadian crude producers are likely to receive lower prices overseas than in the US because of the higher transportation costs involved in transporting bitumen by pipeline to BC's coast and then exporting it by tanker. A 'tidewater premium' does not exist."

Will the Trans Mountain Pipeline and Tidewater Access Boost Prices and Save Canada's Oil Industry?, published March 31 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) and the Parkland Institute through the Corporate Mapping Project, finds several other assumptions that led to the pipeline's approval are also questionable while others are no longer valid. These include:

- Overly optimistic projections of future oil supply, which are much higher than the latest National Energy Board (NEB) projections and did not consider the Alberta government's cap on oil sands emissions. Considering both the most-recent NEB projections and the Alberta emissions cap, Kinder Morgan overestimated oil supply by 43 percent in 2038.

- Kinder Morgan's expectation that no other export pipelines would be built. The federal government has now approved Enbridge's Line 3 project and US President Trump has approved TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline. If these projects are built, which seems likely, there will be a 13 percent surplus of export pipeline capacity without the TMEP.

The report coincides with Kinder Morgan raising \$1.75 billion through an initial public offering (IPO) for the TMEP.

"Given the incorrect assumptions used by the NEB in approving the Trans Mountain pipeline it is surprising that the federal government approved it," Hughes said. "The pipeline isn't needed given recently approved pipelines, it will not mean a higher price for oil, and increased tanker traffic would place unnecessary risks on BC's Lower Mainland and sensitive marine environments. The new BC government would be wise to withdraw the Province's approval for this project."

The report also points out that increasing oil and gas production while at the same time trying to reduce carbon emissions are conflicting priorities.

"Canada has no energy strategy beyond liquidating its remaining resources as fast as possible. What we really need is a comprehensive energy strategy that addresses both the future energy security of Canadians and Canada's commitments on climate change," Hughes said.

This report was undertaken as part of

the Corporate Mapping Project (CMP). The CMP is a six-year research and public engagement initiative jointly led by the University of Victoria, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC and Saskatchewan Offices, and the Alberta-based Parkland Institute. This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

For more information, please contact Jean Kavanagh at 604-802-5729 or jean@policyalternatives.ca.

Federal budget 2017 disappoints; fails to follow through on many Trudeau promises

OTTAWA – Canadians struggling with precarious employment, rising costs, and record household debt got little in the Liberal budget to make Canada's economy work for them, while the wealthy and well-connected were rewarded.

Failing to follow through on Trudeau's promise to close CEO stock option loopholes, the federal budget hands over \$725 million to the wealthiest CEOs every year. Meanwhile, the government ignored the NDP's call for tax relief for small and medium businesses, and there is no mention of concrete plans to address precarious work and to create good full time jobs to replace the tens of thousands that have been lost since the Liberals took office.

"Budgets are about choices and unfortunately Liberals have chosen tax breaks for wealthy CEOs and giveaways to large corporations over helping the unemployed, veterans, and Indigenous children", said NDP Leader Tom Mulcair.

Budget 2017 fails to allocate the \$155 million needed to end racial discrimination in the provision of indigenous child welfare

services – and in fact, today at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, government lawyers continued to fight against indigenous children in court. It also maintains the 2% cap on Indigenous program funding, which amounts to another key Liberal election pledge broken.

"In spite of the urgency of action to combat climate change, this budget actually cuts funding for the Pan-Canadian Clean Growth and Climate Change framework by more than a billion dollars over the next two years and delays action and investments," said MP Alistair MacGregor. "Locally, I am hopeful that we are able to find federal funding to raise the Cowichan Weir; however there are no new pockets of money to turn to in the budget."

"I was also surprised that there is no home energy efficiency retrofit program to help Canadians reduce their emissions and lower their energy bills," added MacGregor. "This program is not only one of the most cost effective ways to reduce emissions; it is also a great job creator."

New mapping site will track Kinder Morgan construction

VANCOUVER — As Kinder Morgan looks to crowdfund its ill-conceived pipeline, the Wilderness Committee is launching a live map so British Columbians can stay up-to-date if the shovels ever do hit the dirt.

This map is available at km-watch.ca with the detailed pipeline route and features of interest like drinking water aquifers and intakes, nearby at-risk schools and endangered species habitat. It will enable the flow of crucial information to and from communities on the ground should the company start construction.

"If Kinder Morgan is foolish enough to start building their pipeline, they won't be able to get any work done without the whole province knowing about it," said McCartney. "At the same time we will use this map to show all the places where resistance is mounting."

While 18 court cases and a new government in Victoria could stop or slow the project, people all along the pipeline route are organizing to halt or stall construction

if it proceeds. Currently, participants in a march from Victoria have chained themselves to the gates of the Kinder Morgan terminal in Burnaby.

"No matter where they start this thing they will meet opposition," said McCartney.

In May the company made a final investment decision, conditional on a successful completion of its initial public offering May 30. It hopes to raise the funds needed to build the pipeline, but much skepticism remains about its ability to start the project in September.

"Kinder Morgan's last ditch effort to convince investors that their doomed project isn't a horrible idea is embarrassing," said McCartney. "But those folks need to know that British Columbians are ready to defend our home."

Readers who want more information, can contact Peter McCartney, Climate Campaigner, Wilderness Committee, by phone at 778-239-1935, or by email at peter@wildernesscommittee.org



Helping constituents with Federal government programs and services.



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BC New Democrats and BC Greens ratify historic agreement

By Carole James

During the recent election campaign, New Democrats put forward a platform that was about people and families and what matters to them most. I was proud to run on a vision for change, and a commitment to make life better for people.

After intensive negotiations, I'm proud to say that we've reached an historic agreement between the New Democrat caucus and the BC Green caucus. It was an honour to work alongside our Leader John Horgan and to be part of these negotiations.

We've ratified an agreement pledging to collaborate to support a stable New Democrat government that works for all people – not just those at the top. Together we can make life more affordable, protect our environment, and restore the services people count on.

As I write this (in early June), the circumstances remain uncertain, as we wait for the incumbent government to recall the BC Legislature. But our plan for a government that works for people and works to-

gether for the public good is certain.

The public expects us to get down to work, and to work together on their behalf to make life easier. We know there will be challenges, but this agreement puts in place a partnership for a long-term, stable government.

We're going to fix the services people count on and make life more affordable. We're going to protect our planet and build a sustainable economy that works for everybody and delivers good, stable, family-supporting jobs.

Under the agreement, a BC New Democrat government will advance several legislative and policy initiatives with the support of the BC Green Caucus, including:

- Reforming our electoral system, getting the influence of big money out of politics, and reforming lobbying rules;
- Recognizing that education is about lifelong learning and fast-tracking enhancement to K-12 education funding;
- Protecting and promoting public

health care, creating a proposal for an essential drugs program, and giving families the security of quality, affordable child care;

- Getting people moving with better transit;
- Giving the opioid crisis the attention it deserves;
- Establishing an Emerging Economy Task Force and an Innovation Commission;
- Eliminating Medical Services Premiums;
- Implementing a province-wide poverty reduction strategy and a basic income pilot project;
- Fighting climate change while creating good jobs and introducing rebate cheques that will mean most people pay less;
- Sending the Site C project immediately to an independent review;
- Opposing the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion project.

Families have waited 16 years for high

quality care for our vulnerable elders, and better access to family doctors. They have waited 16 years for their children to get out of portables and into real classrooms. They have waited 16 years for a government that takes our housing crisis seriously and takes real action to make life affordable for families.

We look forward to giving British Columbians a stable government, and a legislature where all MLAs can put forward good ideas that help people, and come together to support them. That's the opportunity voters presented us with when they made their decision.

It's an exciting time for British Columbia and I'm honoured to return to the BC Legislature to serve the people of Victoria Beacon Hill. I am grateful for the trust voters have placed in me. I intend to deliver on the commitments we made to the people of our province.

Carole James was reelected as MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill on May 9.

The end of the beginning

By Jim Manly

Congratulations to John Horgan and Andrew Weaver along with their supporters for waging strong election campaigns that increased both parties' membership in the Legislature; equally important was their willingness to put aside differences in order to reach an historic ground-breaking agreement. For a moment we can take a brief halt to celebrate the election with its precarious but hopeful results and then we need to move on to the high steep climb ahead of us.

The Agreement between the Green and NDP caucuses left me almost breathless as I considered its ambitious scope and the work that needs to be done. It looks forward not simply to governing BC well as a province but to be in the forefront of

the global struggle to leave this planet as a habitable place for our great grandchildren.

Like a house that has been allowed to deteriorate over the years with a sagging foundation, leaking roof, smashed walls, broken windows and has become a home for rodents, British Columbia urgently needs repairs.

Health care, child care, education, social services, affordable housing, minimum wage legislation, and poverty reduction all need immediate attention and the Agreement commits an NDP government with Green caucus support to providing these. In addition the Agreement commits an NDP government to a new approach to the economy that recognizes the need to address climate change; it promises to refer the Site C dam to the Public Utilities Commission and to use every available tool to

stop the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Our province will be pushing ahead into a relatively unknown new economy, a new society with new politics.

As a foundational principle both caucuses support the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Tsilhqot'in Decision of the Supreme Court. These are basic to a new respectful relationship with First Nations. But we all need to be aware that these can have extremely important consequences which limit the ability of government to make unilateral decisions. As UNDRIP comes into effect, First Nations, having the right to "free, prior and informed consent" with respect to development on their traditional land, will form a third party in making decisions along with government and commercial interests. For this reason the Trudeau Liberals have pulled back from an earlier commitment to support UNDRIP.

The Liberal "Wild West" cycle of party financing, lobbying and privileged access to government will be brought under control to protect us from the undue influence of special interests. The Agreement promises to hold a referendum on proportional representation in the fall of 2018 in time for the next election.

The Agreement which is meant to hold for four years commits both parties to "good faith and no surprises". However, even if neither party introduces surprises, we can be certain that surprises will come. Health issues could upset the narrow balance of power. Shifting commodity prices, Canadian trade deals, Supreme Court decisions and natural disasters can all bring surprises. Many of the commitments have extremely limited schedules which, with the best intentions in the world, the government will find exceedingly difficult to meet.

We can be sure that the new government will make mistakes. We can be even more certain that even the smallest mistake will be magnified by the opposition: not only by MLAs sitting opposite in the Legislature but the by opposition of big money and its voice in the controlled media.

In 1948 Jean-Paul Sartre published a play about a small country where a revolutionary new leader committed to nationalize the oil industry. When he did not do so because of pressure from the large next door neighbour, he was deposed and executed. In the final scene the neighbour's ambassador meets Francois, the new president, and warns him that any attempt to nationalize the oil fields would be considered an act of war. Francois responds, "Your government has no right to interfere in our internal affairs."

"As you wish, Excellency. I would remind you that your country is small and that

ours is very powerful."

A silence. The Ambassador insists politely, "My government expects a definite answer."

"We shall not touch the oil fields," says Francois.

The play's title says it all: *In the Mesh*.

Whether we like it or not, along with our economy and our politics, all of us are in the mesh. This is not to say that we are without hope but that it will be a long and arduous task for any political leader to free us. In the last federal election, many Canadians looked to Justin Trudeau and his "sunny ways" to free us from legacy of Harper's Conservatives. In the 20 months since, as they observed Trudeau's policies, they have discovered that we are still in the mesh with respect to indigenous affairs, pipelines, Site C dam, trade deals, defence, foreign policy and human rights.

In addition to the opposition, one of the biggest threats is the feeling on the part of many supporters that we've won, that we can now take it easy and leave everything for John Horgan and his crew to fix. Even working together the NDP and Green caucuses can't do it all by themselves, they need our help.

While all of us can heave a sigh of relief and hope that Christie may be gone, gone, gone, we need to continue our work if we want the NDP government to achieve its maximum potential. We need to continue with letter writing campaigns, phone-ins to radio shows, social media, marches, vigils and picket lines. An NDP government needs pressure from us to counter the constant pressure it will feel from the opposition. Where possible that pressure needs to be accompanied with encouragement and support.

At the local level NDP and Green members can develop paths of cooperation and, who knows, we might even find ways of getting support from Liberals. To paraphrase Churchill, the May 9 election and the agreement between the NDP and Greens, was not the end, not even the beginning of the end, but perhaps it was the end of the beginning.

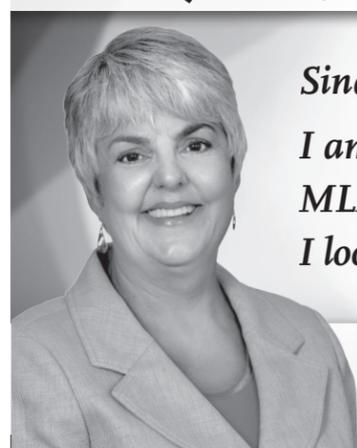


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Sincerest thanks for your support.

*I am honoured to serve as your
MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill, and
I look forward to our work together.*

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CORRECTION

In the April 2017 issue of *Lower Island News*, the name of co-author Susan Boyd was in advertently misspelled, for which we apologize. Ms Boyd, a professor at the University of Victoria, and co-author Dave Murray wrote on heroin-assisted treatment—not criminalization and overdose death. -- Editor

In praise of Gary Holman

By Irene Wright

New Democrats on Salt Spring Island have been seriously saddened by Gary Holman's disappearance from our Legislature. Adam Olsen, the Green victor, likely has some positive points, but his record cannot begin to compare with Gary's.

I first came to know Gary in the mid-nineties when he expressed interest in local politics. He took a very strong position on the need to preserve and protect the environment, in particular of Salt Spring Island. His fine ability in public speaking and his background as an economist who pursued socially beneficial goals made him an attractive choice for progressives, first as a Capital Regional Director for us on Salt Spring Island and later as our MLA.

The '90s were a busy time for Gary. He protected Ford Lake and surrounding land by raising funds and arranging the purchase of the land by Ducks Unlimited. He was a champion of the South and West Salt Spring Conservation Partnership that was established to highlight the ecological importance of these areas and to work with the various agencies responsible for their protection.

From 1999 to 2002, Gary was a key member of a small group of people who worked thousands of hours to protect the Texada lands on the Salt Spring. This comprised one tenth of the area and was centred around Burgoyne Bay, including the slopes of Mt. Maxwell and the forest around Maxwell Lake.

In the end, and during the last weeks of Premier Dosanjh's time in office, 2,600 acres were protected, but not before much damage was done by logging. The land has been reforested and is growing back. (I had fun presenting Premier Dosanjh with the special calendar produced on Salt Spring for fundraising purposes that featured a number of local women in the altogether, tastefully showing off their beauty and that of Salt Spring.)

Gary served as CRD director from 2002-2008. During that time, he supported local climate action initiatives and facilitated provincial and CRD grants for related projects on our island. He was much concerned about housing and assisted in a number of ways including bonus density with strings attached for affordable housing that would protect affordability in the long run.

He assisted in securing funding for Meadowbrook Seniors' Housing, and chaired the Abbeyfield Seniors Housing Society that managed the purchase of The Cedars, a complex project because it involved two societies and funding from three levels of government. The society was able to accommodate eight households of transition housing for women and children fleeing violence and for three low income senior women.

By opting Salt Spring into the CRD Regional Housing Trust Fund, a number of affordable projects have benefitted and provided almost 50 units of housing.

Under Gary, the Salt Spring Electoral Area received one of the first LiveSmart BC Green Cities Award in 2007 for "achieving integrated community design and man-

agement that encourages physical activity, energy conservation, and environmental benefits". The award of \$25,000 was re-invested through the CRD in energy and water projects.

He supported the application of gas tax (Community Works Fund) and other funding for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, particularly in and around villages, and for potable water upgrades.

A highlight of this time for Salt Springers was the development of a highly successful local bus system under the Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission, a major project established by Gary. Related to this and under the Commission has been the ongoing development of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to reduce automobile dependence. (As a resident of Meadowbrook who no longer drives, I can't say enough about the bus system.)

Gary was a founding director of Transition Salt Spring Enterprise Co-operative, a microlending co-op that supports local green projects and businesses. He also brought financial support for the new library and swimming pool. A further important development under Gary was the establishment of the multistakeholder, collaborative Water Council to address water quality and quantity concerns on Salt Spring.

As our MLA, Gary initiated and chaired the Saanich Peninsula Housing Needs Assessment. It was the first time a needs assessment was done for multiple communities that include a lot of cross employment, and commuting.

The Salt Spring Water Forum is new and ongoing. Gary convened a forum in November 2016 to bring together agencies and affected affordable housing providers to find a solution to the North Salt Spring Waterworks District moratorium that was giving thumbs down to new attachments because of the need to protect a limited water supply. Alternative strategies are being looked at to licence some groundwater and rainwater collection systems.

Gary has played a number of important roles during the 2013-2017 legislative sessions as NDP critic. He has worked particularly hard on the possibilities for democratic reform, including proportional representation, in future elections. He has been a critic for ferries, a subject particularly important for residents of the Gulf Islands, many of whom commute to work. Participating in government work on finance has been an important contribution — particularly given his background as an economist.

We are sad to lose Gary as our MLA because he has so much to give; however, we are so glad that he is here amongst us, and we know that he will continue to be the inspiration that gets us up and out to do the socially responsible things for which he shows such remarkable leadership.

A potluck in Gary's honour and to thank the many volunteers on Salt Spring helping during the recent election was held at the Lions Club Hart Bradley Hall on June 21 from 5:00 - 7:30.

Irene Wright is co-president of the Salt Spring Island NDP Club.



Gary Holman, in front of the BC Legislature Building.

Building a government that works for people

By Mitzi Dean

The just completed election campaign was one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. When I decided to put my name forward for the BC NDP nomination in Esquimalt-Metchosin, I had no way of knowing just how many people would step forward to help.

Over the course of the last few months, I have been inspired and humbled by all the people in our community who believed in our platform and our approach and offered their support. My campaign ran on people power: hundreds of volunteers generously donated their time and dollars to help us retain Esquimalt-Metchosin. I am so grateful and am getting into the hard work of building a better BC.

Our New Democrat caucus is focused on moving the province forward in the spirit of cooperation. It's crucial that we build a government that works for the people again.

I was proud to run a vision for change, and a commitment to make life better for citizens. Our election platform was about people and families and what matters to them most.

At the thousands of doorsteps I visited over the course of the last year, I have heard it again and again: citizens are struggling with increased costs. They just cannot make ends meet with runaway housing costs, ever more expensive hydro rates, ferry fares, ICBC and MSP premiums.

We're going to fix the services people count on and make life more affordable. We're going to protect our planet and build a sustainable economy that works for everybody and delivers good, stable, family-supporting jobs.

Our priorities include reforming our electoral system and getting the influence of big money out of politics. We're going to build affordable housing, enhance funding for education, get people moving with better transit, and provide help to improve public health care. We'll work to eliminate MSP premiums, implement a province-wide poverty reduction strategy and find ways to stop the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion project.

My team is working hard to get a community office up and running as soon as possible. In the meantime, I can be reached at the Legislature at 250-387-3655, My email is Mitzi.Dean.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Thank you for your support. I am humbled by the opportunity to serve the citizens of Esquimalt-Metchosin as their new MLA. We are working quickly to open a community office.



Mitzi Dean MLA Esquimalt-Metchosin

Legislative Office: 250-387-3655 / Mitzi.Dean.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Council of Canadians has new pharmacare toolkit

As part of a national day of action on May 27, Council of Canadians chapter members met with Members of Parliament from across the country to encourage support of a national pharmacare program.

A publicly funded, universal drug coverage program would provide all Canadians with access to the prescription medicines they need, regardless of their ability to pay. In addition to overall health and social benefits, Canadian employers would also benefit by not having to include expensive drug plans in employees' benefit packages.

Right now, Canada is the only country with a public health care plan that does not include prescription drug coverage. The Council of Canadians is working to change that. With the generous support of labour organizations, the Council has produced a

brand new Pharmacare Toolkit with their in-depth report, *A Prescription for Better Medicine: How pharmacare would give Canada an economic advantage*, along with talking points, a factsheet, brochure and more.

Watch the Council's new hand-drawn video at www.e-activist.com/ea-action/ that tells the story of the benefits of pharmacare. Don't forget to share it with friends and family!

A recent poll commissioned by the Council of Canadians shows 91% of Canadians want the Liberal government to implement pharmacare.

You can use the Council's Pharmacare Toolkit, which is filled with all the information you need to convince your MP that Canada needs pharmacare now,



John Horgan MLA Langford-Juan de Fuca

Thank you for your support! I look forward to continuing to serve you.

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ROOMER HAS IT: You're an Occupant

In Victoria's tight and increasingly unaffordable rental market, many people find that their only option is to move into a space in someone else's home. While Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) is only able to help people who are tenants under the *Residential Tenancy Act (Act)*, and most people in these circumstances are not legally tenants, we do get a lot of questions about these types of rental situations. In the following dialogue, we explore some of the questions that come up.

I've been having a hard time finding an apartment in Victoria that I can afford. A friend of mine has told me I can move into her apartment and rent her spare room. Does my friend need to get permission from her landlord or can I just move in?

Your friend's tenancy agreement might restrict the number of occupants that can reside in the unit, or it might state that prior permission from the landlord is required before an occupant can move in. Depending on the terms set out in the tenancy agreement, her landlord may have the right to refuse permission. Therefore, it is a good idea for your friend to talk to her landlord about these plans and to get proper permission if it is required.

What happens if I move in and my friend has not got her landlord's permission?

Your friend may be in breach of her tenancy agreement, which could be grounds for her landlord to give her an eviction notice. If your friend gets an eviction notice and believes that she has not breached the terms of her tenancy agreement, she can dispute the issue at a Residential Tenancy Branch dispute resolution hearing.

Can my friend's landlord take back permission for me to rent my friend's room once he or she has given permission and I have moved in?

No, the landlord cannot rescind their permission once it is already given. However, your friend should note that the permission she has obtained may only apply to you, and she may have to get additional permissions if she wants to have anyone else move in.

If I do move in, will my friend be my landlord or will her landlord be my landlord?

If you move into your friend's apartment as an occupant, you do not have a landlord-tenant relationship with either your friend or your friend's landlord. You would not be considered a tenant (even if you have a written contract with your friend) and you would not have rights or responsibilities under the *Act*.

I've also seen some ads online where people are renting out their spare room. If the person I end up renting a room from is not a friend, would I be considered a tenant then?

The same rules and procedures in respect to occupants apply whether the person you are renting from is a friend or the person is someone who is unknown to you.

I've been looking at some other ads online where the person is renting out a room in their house or condo. What happens if the person whose place I move into owns their residence? Would I have rights as a tenant in that case?

The *Act* excludes living arrangements where a person is renting a room and shares common facilities with the owner of the property. This means that if you move into a house and share bathroom or kitchen facilities with the owner of the house, you would be considered an occupant.

How is this situation different from someone who lives in a room in a rooming house?

The key factor is whether or not you share a bathroom or kitchen with the owner of the house or condo. When a number of people rent rooms in a single house and they each have separate tenancy agreements with the landlord, they are considered tenants in

common (tenants who live together but are not bound by the same terms). When a number of people rent rooms in a single house and they *share* kitchen or bathroom facilities with the owner of the house who lives with them, they are considered occupants (with no legal rights under the *Act*).

What happens if my friend wants me to move out? Does she have to give me an eviction notice?

The *Act* does not apply to your living situation at all, and therefore you are not entitled to a specific amount of warning time if your friend wants you to move, and your friend does not have to give you any explanation for why she wants you to move. This also means that you cannot apply for dispute resolution through The Residential Tenancy Branch. However, if your friend does ask you to move out, you could try negotiating with her to come up with a reasonable move-out plan that works for the both of you.

What happens if I pay the rent and the next day my friend asks me to leave? Do I have the right to get my rent money back?

Again, as an occupant, you do not have protections under the *Act*. This means that you do not have any specific residential tenancy rights or obligations. Any issues or disagreements that you come across in relation to your living arrangement cannot be resolved through the Residential Tenancy Branch. It might be possible for you to resolve your issue about rent money through other civil processes. Please contact TAPS for relevant referrals.

If I find another place to live, do I need to give a certain amount of notice?

No, there is no legislation that requires an occupant to provide a certain amount of notice to vacate. However, if you find another place to live you may want to discuss this with your friend in order to come up with a reasonable plan that works for both of you.

I am concerned about not having legal rights under the Act. Are there any other options in terms of living arrangements with my friend?

If you want to have residential tenancy rights, you might want to talk to your friend and her landlord about the possibility of becoming a co-tenant or a tenant in common. A *co-tenancy* is when your friend's tenancy agreement is formally amended so that you are included as a tenant. In a co-tenancy you and your friend become roommates under the same agreement and you are jointly responsible for the same terms and conditions. In a co-tenancy you would be legally responsible for damages caused by your friend, and vice versa.

Tenants in common are roommates who have separate tenancy agreements with the same landlord. This means that you would have a tenancy agreement with the landlord that is separate from your friend, and that you are solely accountable for fulfilling the terms of the agreement. In this situation, if you were unable to pay the full rent one month, you might get an eviction notice but your friend would not.

Is there anything else I should know?

There are sometimes unique situations where an arbitrator with the Residential Tenancy Branch will consider an original tenant living in the rental unit with a third party tenant to be a sublet. In this situation, a landlord/tenant relationship would exist and the third party would have rights and responsibilities under the *Act*. To find out more information about this, please speak to a TAPS tenancy advocate.

While we do get a lot of questions from people who are occupants, TAPS advocates are only able to provide legal advice to you if you are considered a tenant under the *Residential Tenancy Act*. Any situation not covered by the *Act* is unfortunately outside of our realm of expertise. If you are an occupant and you are unsure of who you can talk to about your rights, please contact TAPS for referrals.

Wilderness Committee in court defending libel appeal

VANCOUVER -- The Wilderness Committee was back in court in early June as Taseko Mines Ltd. appealed a BC Supreme Court decision that rejected its libel suit against the organization.

The mining company launched the action in 2012 challenging communications published by the environmental group on their website as libelous. The Wilderness Committee was educating the public on the risks of Taseko's proposed New Prosperity gold-copper mine which is located in Tsilhqot'in Nation territory, west of Williams Lake BC.

"It is unfortunate that we are required to return to court after successfully defending ourselves against these accusations," said Joe Foy, National Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee. "We are hoping that Taseko's court loss will be upheld and that the right of all Canadians to speak their mind -- even against large companies -- will be reaffirmed."

In his January 2016 ruling dismissing Taseko's claims, Justice Gordon Funt ruled in favour of the Wilderness Committee, and in addition awarded special costs to the organization because Taseko had continued to pursue punitive damages long after it had become apparent that their claim had no merit.

Lawyer Dan Burnett successfully defended the Wilderness Committee against Taseko's action and will represent the organization in court again. "The claim was patently non-meritorious from the start," states the written argument filed by Burnett. "The right of fair comment is one of the essential elements that make up our freedom of speech."

This lawsuit is also seen by some as a strategic lawsuit against public participation (SLAPP suit).

BC once had anti-SLAPP legislation, but in 2001 the provincial government under Liberal leader Gordon Campbell struck down the law, stating it was not needed.

"I believe this court action was launched as an attempt to stop us from writing or speaking out about Taseko's terrible mine proposal," said Foy. "I am hopeful that the incoming Green NDP provincial government will re-introduce legislation prohibiting SLAPP suits."

The court proceedings were webcast live by the BC Court of Appeal.

For more information, readers may contact: Joe Foy, National Campaign Director, Wilderness Committee, by phone at 604-880-2580 or by email to joe@wildernesscommittee.org.



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at victoriaswanlakendp@gmail.com
or write to PO Box 282,
1681 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC V8T 2C1

University of the Uninformed UVic limits availability of non-university publications

By Jonathan Lee

The City of Victoria, British Columbia, has never made headlines by successfully restricting free speech and written expression.

It's the BC seat of government. Its history is awash in political energy and opinions. That's a good thing.

Apparently, though, our internationally promoted seat of learning -- the University of Victoria -- is now not so comfortable making written expressions of Victoria life and opinion quite so readily available to its students and visitors to its campus. That is not a good thing.

This is a story that is close to home for the *Lower Island News* and its readers, but also impacts and affects the readers of so many of the free magazines and newspapers that Victoria residents and visitors -- and UVic students -- have enjoyed for decades.

It's no secret that printed media -- i.e. newspapers and magazines -- have seen massive adjustments this century to business, reporting and distribution models. Digital and online media have replaced many conventional, printed news, opinion and advertising resources.

Printed media is in the process of re-inventing itself. Casualties have included daily newspapers, weekly magazines and so many of the free publications that used to be so widely available at every street corner.

Nevertheless some not-for-profit, free printed newspapers have weathered the digital storm and continue to publish. *Lower Island News* is one of those publications. It survives -- for more than 30 years -- because it publishes long-form, intelligent and

relevant discussion. Its writers and contributors offer informed and professional viewpoints not available or reported in the few remaining for-profit, syndicated and homogenized, conglomerated commercial publications.

The *Lower Island News*, along with other weekly and monthly free publications serves and reflects life in Victoria, Vancouver Island and BC, with a focus and relevancy that the commercial national print and digital press can never capture.

Our free publications in Victoria provide information, viewpoints and informed opinions that clearly provide learning opportunities for Victoria readers -- and UVic students.

Now, seemingly without explanation, the University of Victoria has determined to remove from its campus, access to the *Lower Island News*, and other free publications.

Racks and stations that provided the distribution points in the common areas of the Student Union building have been removed. Only University approved publications are now permitted.

For UVic students, and all students from high school to graduate school, easy access to all sources of news and information, including non-mainstream press, is critical to the learning and research experience.

UVic has deliberately undermined these enriched opportunities on its campus.

The *Lower Island News* can be found around town, of course. It's readily available in the Central Library Plaza, along with many other non-profit, free publications. *Lower Island News* can be found in coffee shops and supermarkets. It can even be found in the archive resource at UVic's own



Lower Island News (and other free periodicals) are no longer permitted in UVic's distribution boxes and racks in the Student Union Building, shown above.



Notice (above) makes it only too clear that publications like LIN are not welcome.

NDP: Give municipalities the ability to regulate water sport activities

OTTAWA -- Today, many New Democrat MPs from Québec, namely Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît), Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières) and Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe -- Bagot) are calling on the federal government to re-examine the legislation connected to water sports and recreational boating, and give more regulating powers to municipalities.

Joined by the mayor of Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka, these MPs held a press conference to remind the Minister of Transportation that municipalities have been demanding this for many years now.

"Many ridings in Quebec, and across Canada, are affected by this problem. Warm days mean the beginning of the tourism season, and municipalities don't always have the means to tighten regulations regarding nautical activities," says MP Anne Minh-Thu Quach. "Municipalities cannot place speed limits on boats or on sound pollution. The FCM and the UMQ are also backing this demand."

A change would be beneficial, not only

for the environment, but also in maintaining economic vitality with more efficient water management.

"I am disappointed by the lack of support municipalities receive from Minister Marc Garneau. He is responsible for this file and I hope he will see to bringing the necessary changes, so that municipalities can regulate the activities that can accelerate riverbank erosion," explains Robert Aubin, the NDP critic for Transportation.

Nautical activities and recreational boating contribute to problems like riverbank erosion, and poor relations between shoreline property owners and boaters.

"Municipalities need to be able to regulate nautical activities in their area. In my riding, the cities of Saint-Hyacinthe and Saint Pie are dealing with many challenges connected to navigation. In particular, the relationships between shoreline property owners and people who practice water sports. Towns must have the ability to legislate, so they can offer a harmonious quality of life to property owners, while also ensuring the safety of leisure boaters."

library.

However, the publication is no longer readily available to be picked up for a read in a UVic coffee shop.

This is a poor and uninformed decision of our valued university, the job of which is to inform -- not withdraw information from students.

UVic President Jamie Cassels must look at this decision and reinstate distribution points on his campus to maximize availability of free publications that can only broaden the knowledge of UVic students.

Isn't that the entire purpose of education, Professor Cassels?

We're sure that Jamie Cassels will be only too pleased to answer that question and, with encouragement, lend his hand, and UVic's policies, in support of Victoria's free speech heritage.

Give him a call or email. Here's his contact information. Say you want access to a free press restored at UVic.

Tel: 250-721-7002 Email: pres@uvic.ca

Victoria-Beacon Hill New Democrats

Stay in Touch!

You can reach your president Lucia Orser
by mail to PO Box 8523, Victoria, BC V8W 3S1
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Hiding the Horrible: Unwittingly eating horse meat

By Diane Walsh

When I was in the Marais district in Paris, France in February 2014 I ate Tartare at Le Taxi Jaune bistro and accidentally ingested horse meat. I was considerably ill for 24 hours and needless to say, mentally discombobulated by the event. How could I have been so foolish and not realize what I was putting in my mouth. Horrendous experience!

I felt both guilty and betrayed. I unwittingly succumbed to the so-called "French-cuisine delicacy" through falling culprit to the vagueness of the menu-explanation for the international traveller. The incident did have one positive and constructive result. It inspired to make further inquiries into the distasteful topic. Three years onward, the following shares some research adventures in North America.

I have been a train passenger on the northern route from Seattle to Washington DC on a couple of occasions. At one stage on one of my cross-country trips, I was engrossed in the pleasant scenery outside the train-window. As we approached Minnesota my emotions changed near St Cloud. I was horrified to suddenly see dozens of horses crammed into a single pen. It went by so fast but I am 100% certain of what I saw. The only reason why I was able to see over the fence is because I was in the dining-car which is on the sec-

ond floor of the train. At moving or standing at ground-level the fence would simply have been too high. In other words this fence was high enough that no passer-by would ever be able to see just how many horses were contained, crammed in right next to each other. If anyone knew there were horses even there, they might only be able to hear sounds. No one could get close enough to the fence without being detected. So the train-window is really the only possible way the actual numbers of captured horses could be observed.



The sight that upset the author...

I can remember it being a horrifying image. My first reaction was that this was a pen of horses destined for slaughter. No empathetic human would let that many horses be crammed in such a small space.

A bit later that same day I had a conversation with a gentleman in the dining-car and he too had been disturbed by the

image. He too had seen it. My mistake was that I didn't take his name as he could have been a second witness.

In speaking further with fellow train travellers, the conundrum (I've been told) is this: When horses are destined-for-slaughter "the group" doesn't tend to be held in one place for long. The gathering spot frequently changes. So just because someone sights dozens of horses in a pen at one particular time doesn't mean that if you go to that precise location in the future that you will be able to see "that same group" or even a "second group" of horses. Buyers know

that the holding and transportation of horses destined-for-slaughter is controversial, and that increasingly animal activists are monitoring the auction houses where physically-compromised horses are being sold.

Buyers also know that it is extremely difficult for state officials to track them. They may own secondary companies such as trucking or moving companies. Enforcing USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) violations proves difficult, needless to say. If horses are transferred across international borders, it should be that fuzzy documentation or concealment around transporting blind or injured horses might also be an area requiring red-flagging, especially if misuse of "Bute" may also be at issue.

I think it is worth going back to this location in Minnesota. The reason is precisely because the state is fertile ground for equine-abuse violations. Minnesota doesn't prevent horse-slaughter. It is just kept somewhat secret. It's worth noting; Minnesota Statutes 2016 (31.621) requires a proper sign informing if the vendor is selling horsemeat in Minnesota. Enforcement is up to the Commissioner.

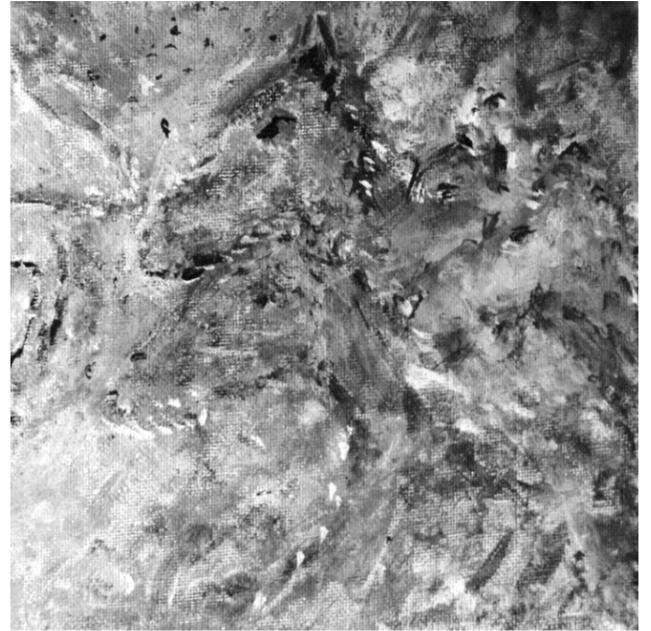
The statute doesn't address how the horse becomes horsemeat and what «signs» are required in this instance. There are virtually no obvious enforceable regulations governing the treatment of horses prior to slaughter – including the protocols for the horse during the holding and transfer period prior to slaughter. This is one of the least monitored situations. Horses for slaughter are literally treated like red-meat before they are even dead.

In speaking with the Humane Society in Washington DC in mid-March 2017 it was suggested to me that it may have been a feed-lot. Say the precise address was known, it is possible that Animal Cruelty, Rescue and Response Team might be prompted to make further inquiries. If any readers are aware of this site, please do get in touch at mediageode@yahoo.com.

According to an article in the *Star Tribune*, in 2013, "the speak" from the state Agriculture Department official and from a representative of Von Hanson's Meats, was that there did not appear to be any horse meat being offered in Minnesota for human consumption. The state seemed to be turning a blind eye because it is commonly known and accepted there was at the time (and still is) evidence of people in the state eating horse.

Dr. Nicole Neeser, the state's meat inspection program manager (in 2013), did not in principle have a problem with horsemeat being eaten in the state, saying... "From what I hear, it's fairly tasty." (Source: *Star Tribune*, Feb. 25, 2013). And if you read Trip Advisor reviews online in Jan. 7, 2015, there is speculation that in some Inns horsemeat is making it onto guest/restaurant patrons dinner plates.

Also of concern is what is commonly referred to as the US-Mexico and/or US-Canada horsemeat pipeline. Animal activists have zoned in on USDA backtags on US horses travelling to a slaughter house



"Precarious" by Diane Walsh @dwalshmedia, who explains that the theme of her painting is Horses in flight from being

in Mexico, able to be identified by the sign, Pemex (they claim they've seen and collected evidence on this).

All this gave rise for support for HR 113 Safe Act, which asked voters to call their federal representatives asking them to co-sponsor it. I've learned that Patrick Meahan (R-PA) US Representative was a co-sponsor of the Safe Act two years ago.

In 2015, the documentary film, "From the Kill Pen" collated various officials speaking out against horsemeat (Source: <http://www.killpenmovie.com>). Natalie Roszkopf, administrative director at the time for ELLSA Technologies, Meat Species Testing – raised awareness about what is commonly referred to as «Bute» – Butaject (Phenylbutazone Injection) 200 mg/ml which, by federal law, restricts use of this drug by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian and is approved by the FDA. Not so regulated is its misuse or overuse. This is something that needs red-flagging.

These are some of the people who are referenced in the film. Potentially they could be of assistance in gathering further evidence. Governor Bill Richardson, former Governor of New Mexico is a lead in the Foundation to Protect New Mexico Wildlife. John Holland is president of Equine Welfare Alliance. Dr. Lester Friedlander, DVM, former USDA Chief Meat Inspector, is a lead in Citizens Against Equine Slaughter.

Also of note is some of the information I've gathered on a US-Canada pipeline. Most relevant to me is a legal horsemeat and large wild-game butcher operating in Richelieu Quebec (a region with which I have personal familiarity) – including business ties sourced in Pennsylvania that have been flagged by animal rights groups.

The final issue that must be spotlighted is blended or mixed meat known as adulterated meat, getting into the food supply. This gives rise to the issue of people eating horsemeat unknowingly and unwittingly. This is especially probable when Minnesota state did at one stage (according to the article I sourced above) attempt to make the claim that no horsemeat is readily [if at all] publicly consumed. The facts are that the law clearly allows sale of horsemeat. There would be no way of knowing, or more to the point, being able to prove that horsemeat is only ever being included in pet food.

Many horses destined for slaughter are of course former (discarded) racing horses, lame horses, old or sick horses – deemed to have no monetary value other than what the buyer can get in their being destined for meat. What this writer is concerned about is the manner in which these horses are treated at this stage of the «economic model» and the lax attitude of state agencies in Minnesota. The laws on their books re: allowable horse meat sale – with a sign – opens the door to extensive and normalized equine abuse.

A version of this article was previously published on the writer's blog, see <https://indydianewalsh.com/2017/04/12/hiding-the-horrible-unwittingly-eating-horsemeat/>

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Indigenous, environmental groups send open letter to 28 major banks

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver -- Over 20 Indigenous and environmental organizations announced June 12 that they had delivered an open letter to 28 major banks, calling on them to back away from funding the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project (TMEP).

The warning letter urges banks to avoid the reputational and financial risk of supporting this destructive project, which is incompatible with realizing the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and respecting human rights, especially those detailed in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"Mark my words, Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project will never see the light of day," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of the BC Indian Chiefs. "We do not accept the unscrupulous liability of dirty oil coming through any pipeline system to benefit some Texans or multinational interests at the expense of our inherent responsibilities to our grandchildren's grandchildren."

The Trans Mountain Expansion Project would not only triple Trans Mountain's capacity — transporting an additional 590,000 barrels of crude oil each day — it would lock in expanded production of one of the most carbon-intensive oils, Alberta tar sands oil.

The 28 banks are the 14 banks that underwrote the Kinder Morgan Canada IPO (Bank of America, Bank of Montreal, Barclays, Canadian and Imperial Bank of Commerce, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, JPMorgan Chase, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Mizuho Financial Group, National Bank of Canada, Royal Bank of Canada, Scotiabank, Société Générale, and Toronto-Dominion Bank); and 14 other banks participating in current and past Kinder Morgan revolving credit facilities (BayernLB, BBVA, BNP Paribas, BPCE/Natixis, Citigroup, Crédit Agricole, DNB ASA, ING, Morgan Stanley, Regions Bank, Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, SunTrust, UBS, and Wells Fargo).

"We're making it loud and clear that banks need to back off from funding Trans Mountain," says Lindsey Allen, executive director of Rainforest Action Network. "Any bank that decides to participate in this project will be implicated in Indigenous rights violations and will knowingly feed fuel to the fire of climate chaos. They won't be able to claim that they didn't have all the relevant information."

The existing Trans Mountain pipeline has sprung 82 recorded spills, including four major spills since Kinder Morgan bought the pipeline in 2005. Future spills, from a massively expanded pipeline, would endanger local sources of drinking water.

"As banks consider financing Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Expansion tar

sands pipeline, they should know that the over 120 First Nations and Tribes that have signed the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion will not let this project happen, says Grand Chief Serge Simon of the Mohawk Council of Kanesatake on behalf of the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion. "Indigenous and allied resistance to the pipeline will not be limited to BC either — it will be all over Turtle Island and will also target the banks that chose to ignore our opposition."

As with the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), a highly controversial project constructed without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion poses a grave threat to Indigenous rights. First Nations that would be directly impacted by the route and port terminal are fighting the project in the courts and leading robust protests on the ground.

"Until banks honour the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent of indigenous people — including the Dené, Cree, Metis, and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation — we will continue to call on municipal and foreign governments to divest from these banks," says Jacqueline Fielder of [Mazaska Talks](#).

With financing for Kinder Morgan's TMEP being finalized in the coming weeks, the groups are urging the banks to heed the lessons learned from DAPL and decline any additional involvement with Kinder Morgan that would facilitate financing of the TMEP, particularly Kinder Morgan's planned C\$5.5 billion credit facility.

"Tar sands oil is deadly, destructive, and economically infeasible," said Tara Houska, National Campaigns Director of Honour the Earth. "Banks run on our money — we have a say in how it is invested. Without consent of indigenous nations impacted by these projects, banks are supporting sacrifice zones, while also actively contributing to climate change. Invest in renewables and our future."

Additional Statements:

Eriel Deranger, director with Indigenous Climate Action:

"We are collectively responsible for achieving climate stabilization in our lifetime. We must challenge the systems that brought us to where we are, or suffer the consequences of our inaction. Tar sands development, and all of its associated infrastructure, are a byproduct of an antiquated economic system that propagates and supports climate chaos while devaluing and dehumanizing Indigenous rights and culture. We must not let money, and the banks that control our money, dictate our futures any longer. It's time to demand real change and action on climate today."

Eugene Kung, barrister and solicitor at West Coast Environmental Law:

"The material legal, political and reputational risk facing Kinder Morgan's pipeline and tanker project means that this is not your average pipeline investment. Investors should be aware of the significant uncertainty surrounding the project the associated risks for anyone invested in it. Kinder Morgan's pipeline and tanker project does not have the consent of affected First Nations, who have banned it in their unextinguished Indigenous laws. This represents significant legal, political and reputational risk that investors need to understand."

Clayton Thomas-Müller of the Mathias Colomb First Nation, and Campaigner at 350.org:

"The extraction and production of tar sands oil not only spreads climate chaos across the planet, it has been killing Dené, Cree and Métis people in Northern Alberta through cancer and the poisoning of their water and food systems. Banks that fund tar sands infrastructure like Trans Mountain are writing death warrants for our people and the world at large."

Ben Smith, Field Organizing Manager with Greenpeace:

"The banks on this list have a choice. They can acknowledge the material and reputational risk of investing in highly controversial projects like the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMEP), or they can continue their wishful thinking that the world won't notice they are contributing to the destruction of the environment, worsening climate change, and violating Indigenous rights. The moral and economic sense to move away from yesterday's energy source has been acknowledged the world over, and the emboldened movement to stand up to big oil is building unprecedented strength. The time has come for financial companies to end their relationship with destructive companies like Kinder Morgan and stand with the people and the planet."

Tom BK Goldtooth, Executive Director, Indigenous Environmental Network

"Our prophecies tell us that life on Mother Earth, as we know it, is in danger and coming to a great transformation. The time is now for banks to divest from an economy based on industrial extraction, production and combustion of fossil fuels and its environmentally risky transportation infrastructures. Investment policy changes are urgently needed that recognize the health and vitality of Earth's living systems, ecological and social well-being and the rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Lucie Pinson, private finance campaigner at Friends of the Earth France:

"European banks are not going to be spared from the mobilization in support of indigenous people against tar sands and other fossil fuels projects in North America. Banks which fail to stay clear from financ-

ing, directly or indirectly these projects will be targeted. In France, we expect Crédit Agricole, who stated during its general assembly to have rejected providing project finance to the Keystone XL, to also reject directly financing Trans Mountain and other tar sands pipelines. But only blacklisting the companies behind these pipelines will guarantee no support is given to these fatal projects."

Sven Biggs, Climate and Energy Campaigner with Stand.earth:

"Bankers that are considering investing this project should know that the people of British Columbia do not want this pipeline. Already tens of thousands people have pledged to stand with First Nations and do whatever it takes to stop Kinder Morgan."

Hannah McKinnon of Oil Change International

"New tar sands infrastructure is incompatible with a safe climate, the world is in a deep hole and the first thing we need to do is stop digging. This pipeline is the epitome of risky: First Nations don't want it, the Province of British Columbia doesn't want it, the climate can't afford it, and the sector that it is being built for doesn't need it."

Vanessa Green, Director, DivestInvest Individual

"At this stage, the financing relationships are exposed and the financial and other risks of putting money into fossil fuel infrastructure are clear. To not recognize them, as an executive or an investor amounts to some combination of negligence, laziness, bad business and moral bankruptcy. What is less clear is which of these banks will gain the most by tapping into the massive global consumer interest in investing where our energy opportunities align with a social conscience."

Regine Richter of Urgewald

"Some banks participating in DAPL may have wished they hadn't. They now have a chance to show they learned their lesson and refrain from getting involved in Trans Mountain. If they don't and help financing it, they manifest their total ignorance towards climate, environment and human rights."

Lena Moffitt, Senior Campaign Director, Our Wild America Campaign - Sierra Club

"Tar sands expansion is disastrous for land, water, climate, and communities. If big banks support this toxic and destructive industry, they are betraying the people who entrust them with their money. We stand with Indigenous communities in urging financial institutions not to finance the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion or any other dangerous tar sands project."

UBCIC is a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Inequality kills 40,000 Canadians a year Low welfare rates cause early death

At a mock funeral March 30 people commemorated the shameful 10th anniversary of BC's frozen welfare rates.

"Welfare cheques don't come with a health warning," said Raise the Rates organizer Bill Hopwood. "But 100 people every week are killed in BC," because politicians have decided to promote poverty and inequality.

Hopwood was speaking at the event called by Raise the Rates to make the point that low welfare rates contribute to the inequality that causes about 40,000 deaths a year in Canada.

"Inequality is a political decision," explained Hopwood. "The richest 1% in BC got a \$41,000 a year tax break. The government must think it's harder to be a millionaire than to live on welfare of \$610 a month."

"Wealth is not being fairly distributed," said Dr. John Millar, former BC Public Health officer. As a result there is a "loss of hope, feeling of despair, pain and mental

illness."

Carmen Paterson called on the government to raise welfare rates to \$1,500 or more so people can have a healthy standard of living.

Without higher welfare, disability and minimum wages people living with HIV "are more likely to die in poverty just as they're winning the war on HIV," said Neil Self of Positive Living.

Raise the Rates is calling on the province to increase welfare rates to at least \$1,500 a month, the poverty line, to promote more healthy and better lives for low income people. The last increase in welfare for single people on basic welfare was on April 1, 2007.

"Don't let them tell you it can't be done."

--Jack Layton,
former leader of NDP

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Coming events

CENTRAL SAANICH RESIDENTS ARE invited to attend regular neighbourhood gatherings, held every Friday night at 7 pm at Spelt's Coffee Shop, 7586 East Saanich Road, in Saanichton. Share stories, books, talk politics and enjoy hot coffee. Nothing is taboo. No pretentiousness, no meeting agenda...just a chance to chat with neighbours and build community. Call 250-652-8228 for further information.

THE VICTORIA LABOUR COUNCIL representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meetings at 7 pm on the 3rd Wednesday each month at the BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street, Victoria. All delegates are welcome to come to meet their executive, president Mike Eso, treasurer, Stan Dzbik, and secretary Michael Maloney.

WOMEN IN BLACK invite you to join them in their monthly vigil to remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki and call on all Canadians and people globally to work for peace and disarmament. All those who support our goals are welcome. For further information, contact bbcf@bbcf.ca.

COWICHAN-MALAHAT-LANGFORD (CML) New Democrats will hold a Summer Picnic on Sunday, July 9, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at Bright Angel Park, 4528 Tigwell Rd, Cowichan Station. An informal chance to get together with other CML members. Bring finger food to share! For further information contact Anne Balding, 250-710-0351 or a.balding@hotmail.com.

ESQUIMALT-SAANICH-SOOKE NDP invites you to its annual Supporter Ap-

preciation Barbecue on Saturday, July 15, 2-5 p.m., at 3837 Duke Road, Metchosin. Admission by donation (suggested donation \$20). Food variety. All ages welcome. RSVP 250-881-8280.

SALT SPRING ISLAND NDP CLUB will hold a Salmon and Lamb BBQ at the Farmers' Institute on Saturday, July 15, from 3:00 pm - 7:30 pm. Live music, special guests, beverages from 3:00 pm. BBQ at 5:00 pm. \$40 for adults, \$20 for children, \$20 for unwaged. Information: 1- 250-537-5347. See <https://secure.bcndp.org/event/585> for tickets.

COWICHAN-MALAHAT-LANGFORD (CML) New Democrats invite you to Appies with MP Alistair MacGregor at Vinoteca Winery, on Saturday, August 19, at 5:00

pm. Join them for this first time event, at 5039 Marshall Rd, Glenora. Tickets \$50, cash bar. For reservation and further information contact Anne Balding, 250-710-0351 or a.balding@hotmail.com

COWICHAN-MALAHAT-LANGFORD (CML) New Democrats invite you to their Tommy Douglas Celebration Dinner. Their 2016 event was such a success, they are doing it again! Friday October 20, at 5:00 pm at Glenora Community Hall, 3660 Glenora Rd, Duncan. Tickets \$100, cash bar. For reservations and further information about coming events contact Anne Balding, 250-710-0351 or a.balding@hotmail.com

Wilderness Committee mourns the death of Gwen Barlee

VANCOUVER – The Wilderness Committee is deeply saddened by the passing of Gwen Barlee, one of Canada's leading environmental advocates. Barlee worked as the Wilderness Committee National Policy Director since 2001. She was an invaluable member of the organization's

executive leadership from early on, guiding the organization through many hard-fought environmental campaigns.

Gwen was a strong leader, and a tireless activist for social change. Over the past 16 years, Gwen distinguished herself as an extraordinarily talented and determined defender of Canadian wild nature – especially in her home province of BC. She showed a passion beyond compare for the defence of the land and the species that call it home. She was a YWCA Women of Distinction nominee in 2016.

"Gwen was a hero and a mentor. She was one of the most compassionate people you'll ever meet – when it came to wildlife, animals, creatures of all kind," said Joe Foy, Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee.

She was a fierce defender of species at risk. Gwen laboured for years to push the case for standalone endangered species legislation for British Columbia. She was instrumental in convincing the BC government to set aside tens of thousands of hectares of land for the protection of the northern spotted owl – one of Canada's most endangered species. She continued to call for an even greater amount of protected forest habitat, not just for the spotted owl but for other species at risk including BC's southern mountain caribou, marbled murrelet and goshawk.

"Gwen was a fearless defender of the public good and that was reflected in the environmental policies she advocated for," said Foy.

Gwen fought for the establishment and protection of provincial and national parks. She helped stop government plans to put large private resorts in provincial parks.



Gwen Barlee

She was a ferocious defender of wild rivers since the mid-2000s against the government's policy of giving them away for private power projects. She helped mobilize thousands of BC residents to protect the Upper Pitt Watershed, Bute Inlet rivers and Glacier and Howser Creeks from industrial power projects.

What distinguished Gwen as an environmental advocate was her research ability and her commitment to enhancing government accountability, upholding the right for British Columbians to scrutinize government activities and promoting transparent, fair and inclusive decision-making through filing freedom of information (FOI) requests.

She worked hard to create unique alliances of people and facilitate a common vision for coming together on an environmental issue – whether working with union leaders, park rangers, First Nations communities, beekeepers or kayakers, she was committed to working with people who loved BC's spectacular wilderness and wildlife.

"Gwen shaped the place that we live in today. She was born and raised here, surrounded by nature in the South Okanagan-Similkameen, her father was an NDP MLA so she was raised around politics," said Foy. "She believed we as British Columbians had the right – and the responsibility – to stand up for this place and say what was needed. And she did just that."

The Wilderness Committee will announce a celebration of Gwen's life and achievements soon.

All three parties pledge their commitment to a poverty reduction plan for BC

BRITISH COLUMBIA, June 22, 2017— Today the Liberals join the NDP and Green parties in pledging their commitment to a poverty reduction plan for BC.

BC once again has the highest poverty rate in Canada at almost 15 percent, according to the latest statistics released a month ago, and has had one of the highest rates for the last 15 years. Yet BC remains the only province without a poverty reduction plan.

"After years of community pressure, it's exciting to see all of our major parties recognizing the urgency of tackling poverty in BC through a poverty reduction plan. Poverty is a non-partisan issue and should have political support from all parties," says Trish Garner, Community Organizer with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.

"Now we need to make sure that any plan implemented is meaningful and accountable to people living in poverty. Poverty reduction plans across Canada are most successful when they are fully-funded and have legislated targets and timelines."

Since 2009, the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC) has been advocating for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan, which includes raising income assistance rates and the minimum wage, providing social infrastructure, such as affordable housing, childcare, education, and health care, and reducing barriers for members of equity seeking groups. The BCPRC now has the support of over 400 organizations throughout BC.

Poverty currently costs BC approximately 8-9 billion dollars per year while a comprehensive poverty reduction plan would cost less than half that at 3-4 billion dollars, according to The Cost of Poverty in BC from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). Seth Klein, Director of the CCPA says, "at least we all now recognize we have a problem."

The full details of the poverty reduction plan put forward by the Liberals have not been outlined. However, one of the promises is an immediate raise of \$100 to welfare rates, which have been frozen at \$610 for a decade.

"\$100 is far too little to make a dent in the wellbeing of those on assistance," says Viveca Ellis from the Single Mothers' Alliance. "It does not pull people above the poverty line."

Another significant promise is an investment of \$1 billion towards child care but, as the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC highlight, "throughout 16 years in government, the BC Liberals could have chosen to make quality child care available and affordable across the province. Instead, they allowed the crisis to grow, particularly over the last four years. While parent fees skyrocketed, the BC Liberal Government consistently underspent their child care budget."

Before this announcement, the Liberals repeatedly said no to a provincial poverty reduction strategy, instead asserting that their Jobs Plan was a poverty reduction plan.

However, most poor people in BC are working – while 15 per cent of British Columbians are living in poverty, only between 3-4 per cent are on income assistance. Notably, the new promises from the Liberals do not include anything to address working poverty, while the NDP has made a commitment to raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour.

"With this all-party support for a provincial poverty reduction plan, we now have an opportunity to achieve a poverty-free BC. Let's hope any new government lives up to this vision," says Trish Garner of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.

Joanna Lord elected president of Cowichan-Malahat-Langford

Although it was Father's Day, more than 30 Cowichan-Malahat-Langford Federal New Democrats were on hand Sunday afternoon, June 18, for their Annual General Meeting at Kerry Park Recreation Centre in Mill Bay.

Member of Parliament for Cowichan-Malahat-Langford Alistair MacGregor reported on what is happening in Ottawa, and said he is looking forward to spending the summer back in the riding.

The task of the nominating committee was easy this year as most of the outgoing executive agreed to continue in office, although positions were shuffled somewhat. That so many of the executive are happy to remain in office is undoubtedly a tribute to the excellent management of the outgoing president, Donna Marentette.

The newly elected executive includes president, Joana Lord; vice-president, Gaye Metz; secretary, Donna Marentette; and treasurer, Sue Elo.

Continuing as members at large are Anne Balding, Beth Davies, Leanne Finlayson, Faye Griffith, Tom Harkins, Rick Lebitschnig, Tim McGonigle and Seamus Wolfe, who will be joined by new members at large Darryl Boon and Pamela Cooling.

New president Joanna Lord, who can be reached at by phone at 250-709-8326 or by email at jo.m.lord@gmail.com, says that the executive is still seeking a youth representative, and for ideas for outreach activities in Langford.

Saanich-Gulf Islands New Democrats

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